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A

VIEW

OF THE PRINCIPAL

DEISTICAL WRITERS

THAT HAVE APPEARED IN ENGLAND IN THE LAST AND PRESENT CENTURY;

WITH

OBSERVATIONS UPON THEM,

AND

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE ANSWERS

THAT HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED AGAINST THEM.

IN SEVERAL LETTERS TO A FRIEND.

THE FIFTH EDITION.

By JOHN LELAND, D.D.

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TO WHICH IS ADDED,

AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

A VIEW OF THE PRESENT TIMES,

WITH REGARD TO RELIGION AND MORALS, AND OTHER IMPORTANT SUBJECTS,

By W. L. BROWN, D.D.

PRINCIPAL OF MARISCHAL COLLEGE, PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY, AND MINISTER OF GREYFRIARS CHURCH, ABERDEEN.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL JUN. & W. DAVIES—W. CREECH, AND BELL & BRADFUTE, EDINBURGH—AND A. BROWN, ABERDEEN.

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A

VIEW

OF THE

DEISTICAL WRITERS, &c.

IN SEVERAL LETTERS TO A FRIEND.

LETTER XXV.

Favourable Declarations of Lord Bolingbroke concerning the Immortality of the Soul, and a future State—He repreſents it as having been believed from the earlieſt Antiquity, and acknowledges the great Uſefulneſs of that Doctrine—Yet it appears from many Paſſages in his Works, that he himſelf was not for admitting it—He treats it as an Egyptian Invention, taken up without Reaſon, a vulgar Error, which was rejected when Men began to examine—He will not allow that the Soul is a ſpiritual Subſtance diſtinct from the Body, and pretends that all the Phænomena lead us to think that the Soul dies with the Body—Reflections upon this—The Immateriality of the Soul argued from its eſſential Properties, which are entirely different from the Properties of Matter, and incompatible with them—The Author's Objections anſwered—Concerning the moral Argument for a future State drawn from the unequal Diſtributions of this preſent State—Lord Bolingbroke's Charge againſt this Way of arguing, as blaſphemous and injurious to divine Providence, conſidered—His great Inconſiſtency in ſetting up as an Advocate for the Goodneſs and Juſtice of Providence—That Maxim, Whatever is, is beſt, *examined—If rightly underſtood, it is not inconſiſtent with the Belief of a future State.*

SIR,

HAVING conſidered the attempt made by Lord Bolingbroke againſt God's moral attributes, and againſt the doctrine of pro-

providence, as exerciſing a care and inſpection over the individuals of the human race, I now come to another part of his ſcheme, and which ſeems to be deſigned to ſet aſide the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate of retributions. I join theſe together, becauſe there is a cloſe connexion between them, and his Lordſhip frequently repreſents the one of theſe as the conſequence of the other.

That I may make a fair repreſentation of his ſentiments, I ſhall firſt produce thoſe paſſages, in which he ſeems to expreſs himſelf very favourably with reſpect to the doctrine of a future ſtate, and then ſhall compare them with other paſſages which have a contrary aſpect, that we may be the better able to form a juſt notion of his real deſign.

He obſerves, that "the doctrine of the immortality of the ſoul, "and a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, began to be "taught long before we have any light into antiquity; and when "we begin to have any, we find it eſtabliſhed *: That it was "ſtrongly inculcated from time immemorial, and as early as the "moſt ancient and learned nations appear to us." And he expreſsly acknowledges the uſefulneſs of that doctrine to mankind, as well as its great antiquity. He declares, that "the doctrine "of future rewards and puniſhments, which ſuppoſes the im-"mortality of the ſoul, is no doubt a great reſtraint to men †." That "it was invented by the ancient theiſts, philoſophers, and "legiſlators, to give an additional ſtrength to the ſanctions of the "law of nature; and that this motive every man who believes it "may and muſt apply to himſelf, and hope the reward, and fear "the puniſhment, for his ſecret as well as public actions, nay, "for his thoughts as well as his actions ‡:" That "the greater "part of the heathen philoſophers did their utmoſt to encourage "the belief of future rewards and puniſhments, that they might "allure men to virtue, and deter them from vice the more effec-"tually §." He obſerves, that "the hypotheſis of a life after "this ſerved two purpoſes: The one was, that it furniſhed an "anſwer to the objections of the atheiſts with reſpect to the pre-"ſent unequal diſtribution of good and evil." This ſeems un-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 237.
† Ibid. vol. iii. p. 559.
‡ Ibid. vol. v. p. 288.
§ Ibid. p. 220.

neceſſary

neceſſary to him, becauſe he looks upon the accuſation to be void of any foundation. But the other purpoſe, he ſays, "was "no doubt very neceſſary, ſince the belief of future rewards and "puniſhments could not fail to have ſome effect on the manners "of men, to encourage virtue, and to reſtrain vice." Accordingly he calls it "a doctrine uſeful to all religions, and incorpo-"rated into all the ſyſtems of paganiſm*." And he ſays, "the "heathen legiſlators might have reaſon to add the terrors of ano-"ther life to that of the judgments of God, and the laws of "men†."

And as he owns, that this doctrine is very uſeful to mankind, ſo he does not pretend poſitively to deny the truth of it. He introduces a plain man of common ſound ſenſe declaring his ſentiments upon this ſubject, and that though he could not affirm, he would not deny the immortality of the ſoul; and that there was nothing to tempt him to deny it; ſince whatever other worlds there may be, the ſame God ſtill governs; and that he has no more to fear from him in one world than in another: That, like the auditor in Tully's firſt Tuſculan diſputation, he is pleaſed with the proſpect of immortality‡. Again, he obſerves, that "reaſon will neither affirm nor deny that there is a future ſtate: "and that the doctrine of rewards and puniſhments in it has ſo "great a tendency to enforce the civil laws, and to reſtrain the "vices of men, that reaſon, which cannot decide for it on prin-"ciples of natural theology, will not decide againſt it on prin-"ciples of good policy. Let this doctrine reſt on the authority "of revelation. A theiſt, who does not believe the revelation, "can have no averſion to the doctrine§." After having mentioned the ſcheme of a future ſtate propoſed in the *Analogy of Reaſon and Revelation*, part 1. cap. 1. he ſays, "This hypothe-"ſis may be received; and that it does not ſo much as imply "any thing repugnant to the perfections of the divine nature." He adds, "I receive with joy the expectations it raiſes in my "mind.—And the ancient and modern Epicureans provoke my "indignation, when they boaſt as a mighty acquiſition their pre-"tended certainty that the body and the ſoul die together. If they

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 238.
† Ibid. p. 468.
‡ Ibid. vol. iii. p. 558, 559.
§ Ibid. vol. v. 322. 489.

" had this certainty, could this diſcovery be ſo very comfort-
" able?—I ſhould have no difficulty which to chuſe, if the option
" was propoſed to me, to exiſt after death, or to die whole*."

If we were to judge of the author's real ſentiments by ſuch paſſages as theſe, we might be apt to think, that though he was not certain of the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate, yet he was much inclined to favour that doctrine, as not only uſeful, but probable too. But there are other paſſages by which it appears, that, notwithſtanding theſe fair profeſſions, he did not really acknowledge or believe that doctrine himſelf, and, as far as his reaſoning or authority could go, has endeavoured to weaken, if not deſtroy, the belief of it in the minds of others too.

He repreſents this doctrine as at beſt no more than a uſeful invention. He expreſsly ſays, that " the ancient theiſts, poly-
" theiſts, philoſophers, and legiſlators, *invented* the doctrine of
" future rewards and puniſhments, to give an additional ſtrength
" to the ſanctions of the law of nature†:" and particularly, that the *invention* of it was owing to Egypt, *the mother of good policy, as well as ſuperſtition*‡. The general prevalency of this opinion he attributes to the *predominant pride of the human heart;* and that " every one was flattered by a ſyſtem that raiſed
" him in imagination above corporeal nature, and made him hope
" to paſs in immortality in the fellowſhip of the gods§. And after having ſaid, that it cannot be demonſtrated by reaſon, he adds, that " it was originally an hypotheſis, and may therefore be
" a vulgar error: it was taken upon truſt by the people, till it
" came to be diſputed and denied by ſuch as did examine‖." So that he ſuppoſes, that thoſe who believed it took it upon truſt without reaſon or examination, and that they who examined rejected it. He pronounces, that the reaſonings employed by divines in proof of a future ſtate are " problematical and futile;" and that " the immortality of the ſoul reſts on moral proofs, and
" thoſe proof are precarious, to ſay no worſe of them**." After ſeeming to ſpeak very favourably, in a paſſage cited above, of the hypotheſis of a future ſtate advanced in Butler's *Analogy*,

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 491, 492.—See alſo ibid. p. 506, 507.
† Ibid. p. 288. ‡ Ibid. p. 352. 489. § Ibid. p. 237.
‖ Ibid. p. 352. ** Ibid. p. 323. 501.

he

he ſays, " it has no foundation in reaſon, and is purely imagi-
" nary." He frequently ſuppoſes a connexion between the immortality of the ſoul and a future ſtate; that the latter is in conſequence of the former: and he has endeavoured to ſubvert the foundation of that immortality, by denying that the ſoul is a diſtinct ſubſtance from the body. This is what he hath ſet himſelf pretty largely to ſhew in ſeveral parts of his *Eſſay concerning the Nature, Extent, and Reality of Human Knowledge*, which takes up near one half of the third volume of his works; eſpecially in the firſt, eighth, and ninth ſections of that Eſſay. He expreſsly aſſerts, " that there is not any thing, philoſophically
" ſpeaking, which obliges us to conclude, that we are com-
" pounded of material and immaterial ſubſtance*;" That " im-
" material ſpirits, conſidered as diſtinct ſubſtances, are in truth
" the creatures of metaphyſics and theology†:" That " human
" pride was indulged by heathen philoſophers and Platonic Chriſ-
" tians; and ſince they could not make man participant of the
" divine nature by his body, they thought fit to add a diſtinct
" ſpiritual to his corporeal ſubſtance, and to aſſume him to be a
" compound of both‡:" And that " the notions that prevail
" about ſoul, ſpiritual ſubſtance, and ſpiritual operations and
" things, took their riſe in ſchools, where ſuch doctrines were
" taught as men would be ſent to Bedlam for teaching at this
" day§." He has a long marginal note, vol. iii. p. 514, *et ſeq.* which is particularly deſigned to anſwer Mr. Wollaſton's arguments for the immortality of the ſoul. He there affirms, that
" it neither has been, nor can be proved, that the ſoul is a diſ-
" tinct ſubſtance united to the body:" That " to ſuppoſe the ſoul
" may preſerve a faculty of thinking when the body is deſtroy-
" ed, is aſſumed without any evidence from the phænomena;
" nay, againſt a ſtrong preſumption derived from them:" That
" whilſt we are alive, we preſerve the capacity, or rather faculty,
" of thinking, as we do of moving, and other faculties plainly
" corporeal. When we are dead, all theſe faculties are dead
" with us:" and, as he thinks, " it might as reaſonably be ſaid,
" we ſhall walk eternally, as think eternally." He ſays, " the

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 363, 564.
† Ibid. p. 427.
‡ Ibid. p. 480.
§ Ibid. p. 534, 535.

" word *ſoul*, in philoſophical conſideration, taken for a diſtinct " ſubſtance united to the body," may be paralleled with " the " *primum mobile*, and element of fire, which were names invent- " ed to ſignify things which have no exiſtence:" and adds, that " this figment of a ſoul, if it be a figment, received ſtrength from " the ſuperſtitious theology of the heathens *." He repreſents the hypotheſis of two diſtinct ſubſtances in man as more " incon- " ceivable and abſurd, than that of thoſe who ſay there is no ſuch " thing as material ſubſtance, or a material world †:" and yet he ſays, " that there is material ſubſtance no man can doubt— " and that thoſe who doubted it have either done it to exerciſe " their wit, or have been tranſported by overheated imaginations " into a philoſophical delirium ‡." He pronounces, that for philoſophers to maintain that the ſoul is an immaterial being, is as if they ſhould agree " that twice two makes five §." And though, in a paſſage cited before, he introduces a plain man ſaying, That as he could not affirm, ſo he would not deny a future ſtate, yet he makes him declare, that, " revelation apart, all the phænomena " from our birth to our death ſeem repugnant to the immateriality " and immortality of the ſoul; ſo that he is forced to conclude with Lucretius,

——*Gigni pariter cum corpore, et una*
Creſcere ſentimus, pariterque ſeneſcere mentem."

That " God had given him reaſon to diſtinguiſh and judge, and " external and internal ſenſe, by which to perceive and reflect; " but that this very reaſon ſhewed him the abſurdity of embrac- " ing an opinion, concerning body and mind, which neither of " theſe ſenſes ſupports ‖."

I believe you will be of opinion, upon conſidering what has been now produced, that Lord Bolingbroke has left us little room to doubt of his real ſentiments in this matter. I ſhall now examine whether he has offered any thing that is of force ſufficient to invalidate a doctrine, the belief of which he himſelf acknowledges to be of great uſe to mankind.

As to that which lies at the foundation of his ſcheme, *viz.* his

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 516, 517, 518. † Ibid. p. 522.
‡ Ibid. p. 379. § Ibid. p. 536. ‖ Ibid. p. 557.

denying

denying that the ſoul is a ſpiritual or immaterial ſubſtance diſtinct from the body, I do not find that he has produced any thing which can be called a proof that ſuch a ſuppoſition is unreaſonable. He indeed inveighs againſt metaphyſicians and divines for talking about ſpiritual and immaterial eſſences and ſubſtances: he charges them with *fanteſtical ideas*, and a *pneumatical madneſs*. But ſuch invectives, which he repeats on all occaſions, will hardly paſs for arguments.

He doth not pretend to ſay, as ſome have done, that ſpiritual or immaterial ſubſtance implies a contradiction. He blames Spinoſa for maintaining that there is but one ſubſtance, that of matter; and aſſerts, "though we do not know the manner of God's "being, yet we acknowledge him to be immaterial, becauſe a "thouſand abſurdities, and ſuch as imply the ſtrongeſt contra-"diction, reſult from the ſuppoſition, that the Supreme Being "is a ſyſtem of matter*." He ſays indeed, that "of any other "ſpirit we neither have nor can have any knowledge:" and that "all ſpirits are hypothetical, but the Infinite Spirit, the "Father of Spirits†." But if there are other beings, whoſe eſſential properties are inconſiſtent with the known properties of matter, and particularly if our own ſouls are ſo, and if abſurd conſequences would follow from the ſuppoſing them to be material beings, may it not be reaſonably argued, that they are ſubſtances of a different kind from what we call matter or body? The only way we have, by his own acknowledgment, of knowing different ſubſtances, is by their different qualities or properties. He obſerves, that "ſenſitive knowledge is not ſufficient to "know the inward conſtitution of ſubſtances, and their real "eſſence, but is ſufficient to prove to us their exiſtence, and to "diſtinguiſh them by their effects‡:" And that "the complex "idea we have of every ſubſtance is nothing more than a com-"bination of ſeveral ſenſible ideas, which determine the apparent "nature of it to us." He declares, that "he cannot conceive a "ſubſtance otherwiſe than relatively to its modes, as ſomething "in which thoſe modes ſubſiſt§:" and blames the philoſophers for "talking of matter and ſpirit as if they had a perfect idea of

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 321. 503.
† Ibid. p. 321. 427.
‡ Ibid. p. 371.
§ Ibid. p. 524.

" both, when in truth they knew nothing of either, but a few " phænomena inſufficient to frame any hypotheſis*." Yet he himſelf ſpeaks of material ſubſtance, as a thing " we perfectly " know and are aſſured of, whilſt we only aſſume or gueſs at " ſpiritual or immaterial ſubſtance†. But we have as much reaſon to be aſſured of the latter as of the former, ſince in neither caſe the ſubſtance or eſſence itſelf is the object of our ſenſe, but we certainly infer it from the properties, which we know in the one caſe as well as in the other. He does not pretend to deny that the exiſtence of ſpiritual ſubſtance is poſſible‡. Why then ſhould not he allow their actual exiſtence, ſince there are properties or qualities, from which it may reaſonably be inferred, that they actually do exiſt?

He finds great fault with Mr. Locke for endeavouring to ſhew, that the notion of ſpirit involves no more difficulty or obſcurity in it than that of body, and that we know no more of the ſolid than we do of the thinking ſubſtance, nor how we are extended than how we think. In oppoſition to this he aſſerts, that we have clear ideas of the primary properties belonging to body, which are ſolidity and extenſion, but that we have not a poſitive idea of any one primary property of ſpirit: and the only proof he brings for this is, that actual thought is not the eſſence of ſpirit. But if, inſtead of actual thought being the eſſence of the ſoul, the faculty of thinking be ſuppoſed to be one of its primary eſſential qualities or properties, this is what we have as clear an idea of as we have of ſolidity and extenſion§. He himſelf elſewhere obſerves, that " our ideas of reflection are as clear and diſtinct as " thoſe of ſenſation, and convey knowledge that may be ſaid to " be more real‖:" And that " the ideas we have of thought by " reflection, and of ſome few modes of thinking, are as clear as " thoſe we have of extenſion, and the modes of extenſion by ſen- " ſation**." Why then may we not from thoſe ideas infer a thinking, as well as from the other a ſolid extended ſubſtance? and that theſe ſubſtances are abſolutely diſtinct, and of different natures, ſince their properties manifeſtly are ſo? He hath himſelf acknowledged enough to ſhew the reaſonableneſs of this

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 509, 510. 512. † Ibid. p. 509.
‡ Ibid. p. 509. § Ibid. p. 510, 511, 512. ‖ Ibid. p. 365. ** Ibid. p. 427.

concluſion,

concluſion. "That we live, and move, and think," ſaith he, "and that there muſt be ſomething in the conſtitution of our "ſyſtem of being, beyond the known properties of matter, to "produce ſuch phænomena as theſe, are undeniable truths." He adds indeed, "what that ſomething is, we know not; and "ſurely it is high time we ſhould be convinced that we cannot "know it*." But though we cannot deſcribe its intimate eſſence, we may know enough of it to be convinced, that it is not matter. It is to no purpoſe to pretend, that there may be unknown properties of matter, by which it may be rendered capable of thinking: for the properties of matter that we do know are inconſiſtent with the power of ſelf-motion and conſciouſneſs. It is true, that he cenſures thoſe as *proud dogmatiſts*, who beſtow the epithets of *inert*, *ſenſeleſs*, *ſtupid*, *paſſive*, upon matter†: but in his calmer mood, when he is not carried away by the ſpirit of oppoſition, and has not his hypotheſis in view, he owns, that "matter "is purely paſſive, and can act no otherwiſe than it is acted "upon‡." It is therefore inconſiſtent with its nature to aſcribe to it a principle of ſelf-motion.

He expreſsly acknowledges, that "our idea of thought is not "included in the idea of matter§." And that intellect is certainly above the "power of motion and figure, according to all "the ideas we have of them; and therefore (ſaith he) I embrace "very readily the opinion of thoſe who aſſume, that God has "been pleaſed to ſuperadd to ſeveral ſyſtems of matter, in ſuch "proportions as his infinite wiſdom has thought fit, the power of "thinking‖. This is an hypotheſis he ſeems fond of; he frequently refers to it, and ſays it is little leſs than blaſphemy to deny it**. Mr. Locke, as he obſerves, ſuppoſed, that God might, if he pleaſed, give to certain ſyſtems of created ſenſeleſs matter, put together as he thinks fit, ſome degree of ſenſe, perception, and thought. But what Mr. Locke had advanced as barely poſſible, for aught he knew, to Almighty Power, our author aſſumes as having been actually done, and as continually done in the ordinary courſe of things. But I think we may ſafely leave it to

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 509.
‡ Ibid. vol. v. p. 472.
‖ Ibid. vol. v. p. 35.
† Ibid. p. 25
§ Ibid. vol. iii. p. 364.
** Ibid. vol. iii. p. 364.

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any unprejudiced judgment, whether it be not more reaſonable and more philoſophical, to aſſign different ſubſtances as the ſubjects of properties ſo entirely different, than to ſuppoſe properties merely ſuperadded by omnipotency to ſubſtances to which they do not naturally belong? Why ſhould Lord Bolingbroke have been ſo backward to acknowledge a diſtinct ſubſtance from matter as the ſubject of theſe properties, when he himſelf was obliged to acknowledge, that the *idea of thought is not included in the idea of matter*, and that *intellect is above the power of motion and figure, according to all the ideas we have of them?* Is it agreeable to the divine wiſdom, or to the order of things, to ſuppoſe, that God, in the general courſe of his providence, continually ſuperadds preternatural or ſupernatural properties and powers to things not naturally fitted to receive them, rather than that he hath produced ſpiritual ſubſtances, to which by the original conſtitution of their natures theſe properties and powers do belong? It hath been often ſhewn by thoſe that have treated this ſubject, that the eſſential properties of body and ſpirit are not only diſtinct, but incompatible, and that therefore they cannot belong to the ſame ſubſtance, but muſt be the properties of different ſubſtances. Matter being a ſolid, figurable, diviſible ſubſtance, conſiſting always of ſeparable, nay of actually ſeparate and diſtinct parts, it is evident, from the very nature of it, that it is not one indiviſible ſubſtance, but is compounded of innumerable little ſubſtances, which are really diſtinct, though contiguous; ſo that if the intelligent ſubſtance in us were corporeal, it would be a compound of many intelligences and conciouſneſſes, which could not be one and the ſame individual intelligence and conſciouſneſs. Matter therefore is not a ſubject capable of an individual conſciouſneſs, which conſequently muſt have ſome other ſubject to reſide in. This argument is purſued with admirable clearneſs and force by the learned Dr. Clarke, in his letter to Mr. Dodwell, and in his ſeveral defences of it againſt Mr. Collins, who puſhed the argument for the materiality of the ſoul as far as it could bear. Nor do I find that Lord Bolingbroke hath advanced any thing that can be called new upon this ſubject. He ſuppoſes, but does not prove, all the ſpecies of intellectual beings to be material, and talks of an *intellectual ſpring* common to them all; which, he ſays, is the ſame ſpring in all, but differently

ferently tempered, ſo as to have different degrees of force and elaſticity in ſome from what it has in others; and he reſolves the ſurprizing variety of its effects into the apparent difference in the conſtitutions or organizations of animals*. But it is juſtly argued on the other hand, that it is abſurd to ſuppoſe, that that which is unintelligent and inſenſible before organization, can become intelligent and ſelf-conſcious by organization, ſince organization does not alter the nature and eſſence of things.

Theſe obſervations ſeem to me ſufficient to take off the force of what Lord Bolingbroke hath advanced, to ſhew that the ſoul is not an immaterial ſubſtance diſtinct from the body.—His view in it is plain: it is to deſtroy the proof of its immortality, and to bring in this concluſion, that ſince it is not a diſtinct ſubſtance from the body, it muſt die with it. He pretends indeed, that the opinion of the ſoul's immateriality adds no ſtrength to that of its immortality, and blames the metaphyſical divines for *clogging the belief of the immortality* of the ſoul with that of its *immateriality*; and that by *reſting too much* on the latter they *weaken* the former†. But the true reaſon of his finding fault with it is, that the immateriality of the human ſoul furniſheth a ſtrong preſumption in favour of its immortality, or at leaſt that it may ſurvive when the body is diſſolved. That he himſelf is ſenſible of this, appears from what he acknowledges, that "on ſuppoſition "of the ſoul's being a different ſubſtance from matter, philoſo- "phers argue admirably well *a priori*, and prove with great "plauſibility, that this mind, this ſoul, this ſpirit, is not material, "and is immortal." He urges indeed, that "this aſſumption "cannot ſtand an examination *a poſteriori*‡;" that is, as he elſewhere obſerves, all the phænomena from our birth to our death ſeem repugnant to the immateriality and immortality of the ſoul. But all that theſe phænomena prove is, not that body and ſoul are one and the ſame ſubſtance, but that there is a cloſe union between them, which there may be, and yet they may be ſubſtances of very different natures; and that they really are ſo appears, as has been already ſhewn, from their different eſſential properties. The laws of this union were appointed by the author

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 526, 527. † Ibid. p. 535. 539.
‡ Ibid. p. 509.

of

of the human frame: and by virtue of thoſe laws, ſoul and body have a mutual influence upon one another whilſt that union ſubſiſts. But it by no means follows, that, when this union is diſſolved, both theſe ſubſtances, ſo different from one another, do alike fall into the duſt. Nor can this be concluded from the phænomena.—We ſee indeed what becomes of the fleſhy corruptible body; but we cannot pretend to decide, that therefore the thinking immaterial ſubſtance is diſſolved too, or to determine what becomes of it.

But he urgeth, that though "thinking and unthinking ſub-"ſtances ſhould be ſuppoſed ever ſo diſtinct from one another, "yet as aſſumed ſouls were given to inform bodies, both are "neceſſary to complete the human ſyſtem; and that neither of "them could exiſt or act in a ſtate of total ſeparation from the "other*." And he obſerves, that Mr. Wollaſton is ſo ſenſible of this, that he ſuppoſes, that there is, beſides the body which periſhes, ſome fine vehicle that dwells with the ſoul in the brain, and goes off with it at death. Our author has not offered any thing to ſhew the abſurdity of this ſuppoſition, except by calling ſuch a vehicle the *ſhirt of the ſoul*, and talking of the ſoul's *flying away in its ſhirt into the open fields of heaven:* which may, for aught I know, paſs with ſome perſons for witty banter, but has no argument in it. Very able philoſophers, both ancient and modern, have ſuppoſed, that all created ſpirits are attended with material vehicles. But whatever becomes of this ſuppoſition with regard to the human ſoul, I do not ſee how it follows, that a ſubſtance which is eſſentially active, intellective, and volitive, ſhould loſe all intellect, action, and volition, merely on its being ſeparated from a material ſubſtance to which it was united, and which is naturally void of theſe qualities. However it might be bound by the laws of that union for a time, there is no reaſon to think it ſhould be ſtill ſubject to thoſe laws, and that it ſhould be unable to act or think at all, after this union is diſſolved.

The only thing farther which hath any appearance of argument is, that "if the philoſopher aſſerts, that whatever thinks "is a ſimple being, immaterial, indiſſoluble, and therefore im-"mortal,—we muſt be reduced, if we receive this hypotheſis,

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 517.

"to

" to ſuppoſe that other animals beſides have immaterial or im-
" mortal ſouls*." And if it be allowed, that other animals have immaterial ſouls too, I do not ſee what abſurdity follows from it; or why it may not be reaſonably ſuppoſed, that there may be innumerable gradations of immaterial beings of very different capacities, and intended for different ends and uſes. But our author urges againſt thoſe who ſuppoſe ſenſitive ſouls in brutes, and a rational ſoul in man, that " the power of thinking is as
" neceſſary to perception of the ſlighteſt ſenſation, as it is to geo-
" metrical reaſoning: and that it manifeſtly implies a contradic-
" tion to ſay, that a ſubſtance capable of thought by its nature
" in one degree or inſtance, is by its nature incapable of it in
" any other†." But I ſee not the leaſt abſurdity in this; except it be ſaid, that it neceſſarily follows, that a ſubſtance capable of thought or ſenſe in the loweſt degree, muſt be eſſentially capable of thought or ſenſe in the higheſt degree. I can eaſily conceive, that a nature may be ſuppoſed capable of the former, and not of the latter. And muſt not he ſay ſo too, ſince he aſſerts that brutes think, and yet I believe will hardly affirm that they are capable as well as men of geometrical reaſoning? There is no abſurdity in ſuppoſing immaterial ſouls, which have ſenſitive perceptions, and are capable of ſenſitive happineſs, without ever riſing beyond this, or being properly capable of moral agency. And ſuppoſing the brutes to have immaterial ſenſitive ſouls which are not annihilated at death, what becomes of them after death, whether they are made uſe of to animate other bodies, or what is done with them, we cannot tell. Nor is our not being able to aſſign any uſe for them ſo much as a preſumption that they anſwer no end at all, or that they do not exiſt. There may be a thouſand ways which the Lord of nature may have of diſpoſing of them, which we know nothing of.

It appears from what hath been offered, that there is a real foundation in reaſon for the doctrine of the ſoul's immortality, and that therefore there is no need to reſolve it, as this writer ſeems willing to do, into the pride of the human heart. It is his own obſervation, " that men were conſcious ever ſince
" their race exiſted, that there is an active thinking principle in

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 528. † Ibid. p. 531.

" their

" their compoſition.—That there are corporeal natures, we have " ſenſitive knowledge: that there are ſpiritual natures diſtinct " from all theſe, we have no knowledge at all. We only infer " that there are ſuch, becauſe we know that we think, and are " not able to conceive how material ſyſtems can think *." And this certainly is a very reaſonable inference, as reaſonable as it is to infer a material ſubſtance from the affections and properties of matter.

But though it is agreeable to reaſon to believe, that the human ſoul is immaterial and immortal, this doth not imply, as his lordſhip is pleaſed to inſinuate, that " it is immortal by the neceſſity " of its nature, as God is ſelf-exiſtent by the neceſſity of his †." Nor is it ſo underſtood by thoſe who maintain the natural immortality of the human ſoul. What they intend by it is only this: That God made the ſoul originally of ſuch a nature as to be fitted and deſigned for an immortal duration: not naturally liable, as the body is, to corruption and diſſolution: but not, as if it were rendered ſo neceſſarily exiſtent as to be independent of God himſelf. Still it is in his power to annihilate it, if he ſeeth fit to put an end to its exiſtence, though there is no reaſon to think that he will ever do ſo: for ſince it was fitted for immortality by his own original conſtitution, this may be regarded as an indication of his will, that it ſhall continue in immortal being, though ſtill in a dependence on the power and will of the Creator.

It is proper to obſerve here, that our author hath acknowleged ſeveral things which furniſh a very reaſonable preſumption in favour of the doctrine of the immortality of the ſoul. One is, the univerſal prevalence of that doctrine from the eldeſt antiquity. For this ſeems to ſhew, that it is agreeable to the natural ſentiments of the human mind; or at leaſt that it was derived from a primitive univerſal tradition received from the firſt anceſtors of the human race, and which was originally owing to divine revelation. Both theſe may probably have contributed to the general ſpreading of this notion. This writer, according to his cuſtom, varies on this head; for, after having expreſsly aſſerted, that this doctrine was *inculcated from time immemorial*, and that *it began to be taught long before we have any light into*

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 536. † Ibid p. 559.

antiquity,

*antiquity**, he pretends to aſſign the original of it, and aſcribes the invention of it to Egypt, and that it came from thence to the Greeks, to whom it was brought by Orpheus, and from the Greeks to the Romans†. But we find it was equally received among the moſt barbarous as among the moſt polite nations. The ancient Indians, Scythians, Gauls, Germans, Britons, as well as Greeks and Romans, believed that ſouls are immortal, and that men ſhould live in another ſtate after death. There were ſcarce any among the Americans, when the Europeans firſt arrived there, who doubted of it. It has been almoſt as generally believed as the exiſtence of God; ſo that it may well paſs for a common notion.

Another thing taken notice of by this writer, and to which he partly aſcribes the belief of the ſoul's immortality, is what he calls *the powerful deſire of continuing to exiſt.* He obſerves, that this deſire was ſo ſtrong, that "the multitude in the pagan "world were ready to embrace the hope of immortality, though "it was accompanied with the fear of damnation‡." This ſtrong deſire of future exiſtence appears by his own account to be natural to the human mind. And would the author of our beings have ſo conſtituted us, if the object of this deſire was vain, and if there were no future exiſtence to expect? Is not this powerful deſire or expectation of immortality, which is implanted in the human heart, an argument that he that made us, formed and deſigned us, not merely for this preſent ſtate and tranſitory life, but for a future ſtate of exiſtence?

Lord Bolingbroke further obſerves, that one great cauſe of the ſpreading of this doctrine was its being encouraged by the politicians and legiſlators, as well as philoſophers, on the account of its great uſefulneſs to mankind, and becauſe they looked upon it to be neceſſary to enforce the ſanctions of the law of nature§. Now the great uſefulneſs and neceſſity of this doctrine is no ſmall argument of its truth. For if men are ſo framed, that they cannot be properly governed without the hopes or fears of a future ſtate; if theſe are neceſſary to preſerve order and good government in the world, to allure and engage men to virtue, and

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 237. 308.
† Ibid. p. 352. 489.
‡ Ibid. p. 237.
§ Ibid. p. 281. 351.

deter

deter them from vice and wickedneſs; this ſhews that the author of their beings deſigned them for immortality, and a future ſtate, and that conſequently ſuch a ſtate there really is; except it be ſaid, that he formed our natures ſo as to make it neceſſary to govern us by a lie, and by falſe motives, and imaginary hopes and fears.

It ſufficiently appears from what has been already obſerved, that our author, by denying that the ſoul is an immaterial ſubſtance diſtinct from the body, hath done what he could to take away the force of the natural argument for a future ſtate of exiſtence and retributions after this life is at an end. It remains that we take notice of what he hath offered to deſtroy the moral arguments uſually brought for it from the ſuppoſed unequal diſtributions of this preſent ſtate. He ſets himſelf at great length to prove, that the ſuppoſition is abſolutely falſe and groundleſs; that it is highly injurious to God; and tendeth to caſt the moſt blaſphemous reflections upon his providence. In the management of this argument, he hath broke out into the moſt opprobrious invectives againſt the Chriſtian divines and philoſophers, whom he abuſes and traduces without the leaſt regard to decency. He frequently charges them as in a confederacy with the atheiſts; and repreſents them as "complaining of the uni-" form conduct of that providence of God which is over all his " works, and cenſuring their Creator in the government of the " world, which he has made and preſerves.——That they have " done nothing more than repeat what all the atheiſts, from De-" mocritus and Epicurus, have ſaid: That they have puſhed their " arguments on this ſubject ſo far, that the whole tribe of theſe " writers, like Wollaſton and Clarke, do in effect renounce " God; as much as the rankeſt of the atheiſtical tribe:" And he undertakes to prove this, to their ſhame, to be true*. That " the heathen theiſts defended the divine providence againſt the " atheiſts who attacked it, and recommended a cheerful reſigna-" tion to all the diſpenſations of it; whereas Chriſtian divines " have made a common cauſe with the atheiſts, to attack provi-" dence, and to murmur againſt the neceſſary ſubmiſſion that " they pay†." That "the Chriſtian philoſophers, far from de-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 484, 485. † Ibid. p. 486.

" ſending

" fending the providence of God, have joined in the clamour " againſt it." That " they have brought the ſelf-exiſtent Being " to the bar of humanity,—and he has been tried, convicted, and " condemned, like the governor of a province, or any other in- " ferior magiſtrate*."

Accordingly he ſets up as a zealous advocate for the goodneſs " and righteouſneſs of divine providence in the preſent conſtitu- " tion of things, and with great ſolemnity undertakes to *plead* " *the cauſe of God* againſt atheiſts and divines." He affirms, that, " notwithſtanding the human race is expoſed to various evils, " there is no ground for complaint, but abundant cauſe for " thankfulneſs†." That " if we are ſubject to many evils, phy- " ſical and moral, we can ſhew much more good of both kinds, " which God hath beſtowed upon us, or put it into our power " to procure to ourſelves."—That the means to ſoften or pre- vent evils, the chief of which he reckons to be hope, are " ſo " many inſtances of the poſitive goodneſs of God‡:" That " nei- " ther the goodneſs nor juſtice of God require that we ſhould " be better, nor happier than we are§:" That man " enjoys " numberleſs benefits by the fitneſs of his nature to the conſti- " tution of the world, unaſked, unmerited, freely beſtowed‖." He aſſerts, in oppoſition to atheiſts and divines, that " the gene- " ral ſtate of mankind in the preſent ſcheme of providence is " not only tolerable, but happy:—And that there is in this world " ſo much more good than evil, and the general ſtate of man- " kind is ſo happy in it, that there is no room for the exagge- " rated deſcriptions that have been made of human miſery**:" That " God has made us happy, and has put it into our power " to make ourſelves happier, by a due uſe of our reaſon, which " leads us to the practice of moral virtue, and to all the duties of " ſociety††:" That " good men are often unhappy, and bad " men happy, has," he ſays, " been a ſubject of invective rather " than argument, to Epicurus, Cotta, and others among the an- " cients, and to eminent divines among the moderns‡‡." And he particularly examines the inſtances produced by Cotta in Ci-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 488. † Ibid. p. 333, 334.
‡ Ibid. p. 336. § Ibid. p. 512. ‖ Ibid. p. 339.
** Ibid. p. 392. †† Ibid. p. 384. ‡‡ Ibid. p. 394.

cero againſt the providence of God, and ſhews what Balbus might have anſwered*. He finds great fault with Dr. Clarke for ſaying, that "it is certain, from the moral attributes of God, "that there muſt be ſuch a future ſtate of exiſtence, as that, by "an exact diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments, all the pre-"ſent diſorders and inequalities may be ſet right, and that the "whole ſcheme of providence may appear at its conſummation "to be a deſign worthy of infinite wiſdom, juſtice, and good-"neſs." See Clarke's *Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion*, prop. IV. For this he calls him *audacious and vain ſophiſt:* and that "according to theſe men, it appears actually un-"worthy of them at preſent†." And in oppoſition, as he pretends, to divines, he ſhews the general tendency of virtue to promote happineſs, and of vice to produce miſery‡.

Theſe things he enlarges upon in ſeveral of his Fragments and Eſſays in the fifth volume of his works. See particularly the forty-third, forty-fourth, forty-eighth, forty-ninth, fiftieth, fifty-firſt, fifty-ſecond, fifty-third, and fifty-fourth of thoſe Fragments.

It will be neceſſary here to make ſome obſervations; and a few will be ſufficient.

And 1. My firſt reflection is this: that Lord Bolingbroke had no juſt pretenſions to value himſelf upon being an advocate for the goodneſs and righteouſneſs of divine providence, nor could properly attempt to vindicate it, in conſiſtency with his ſcheme. He had taken pains to ſhew, that moral attributes are not to be aſcribed to God as diſtinguiſhed from his phyſical attributes: That there is no ſuch thing as juſtice and goodneſs in God, according to our ideas of them, nor can we form any judgment concerning them; and that there are many phænomena in the preſent courſe of things, which are abſolutely repugnant to thoſe moral attributes. But in that part of his book where he undertakes to juſtify the providence of God in this preſent ſtate, he not only ſuppoſes juſtice and goodneſs in God, but that they are conſpicuous in the whole courſe of his diſpenſations, and that the preſent ſtate of things is agreeable to our ideas of thoſe attributes. Another conſideration which ſhews his great inconſiſt-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 404, & ſeq. † Ibid. p. 395.
‡ Ibid. p. 399, & ſeq.

ency

ency is, that at the ſame time that he ſets up as an advocate for the goodneſs and juſtice of providence in this preſent ſtate, he yet will not allow that providence conſiders men individually at all, though he himſelf owns that juſtice has neceſſarily a reſpect to individuals. I had occaſion to obſerve in my laſt letter, that he aſſerts, that "juſtice requires moſt certainly that rewards and "puniſhments ſhould be meaſured out in every particular caſe "in proportion to the merit and demerit of each individual*." With what conſiſtency then can he undertake to demonſtrate the juſtice of providence in this preſent ſtate, when he makes it eſſential to juſtice, that regard ſhould be had to the caſes and circumſtances of individuals, and yet affirms, that providence in this preſent ſtate hath no regard to individuals? And he ſeems to make its not extending to individuals here, an argument that it ſhall not extend to them in a future ſtate; for he mentions it as an abſurdity in the Chriſtian ſyſtem, that "the proceedings of "the future ſtate will be the very reverſe of the preſent; for that "then every individual human creature is to be tried, whereas "here they are conſidered only collectively; that the moſt ſe"cret actions, nay, the very thoughts of the heart, will be laid "open, and ſentence will be pronounced accordingly†:" where he ſeems to argue, that becauſe individuals are not called to an account, or rewarded and puniſhed here, according to their particular merits or demerits, therefore they ſhall not be ſo hereafter: whereas the argument ſeems to hold ſtrongly the other way, ſuppoſing the juſtice of divine providence; that ſince juſtice neceſſarily requires that a regard ſhould be had to men's particular actions, caſes, and circumſtances, and ſince there is not an exact diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments to individuals in this preſent ſtate, according to the perſonal merit or demerit of each individual, therefore there ſhall be a future ſtate, in which this ſhall be done, and the righteouſneſs of providence ſhall be fully manifeſted and vindicated. And it cannot but appear a little extraordinary, that this author ſhould make ſuch a mighty parade of his zeal for vindicating the juſtice of divine providence, when according to his ſcheme the juſtice of providence

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 405. † Ibid. p. 494.

cannot conſiſtently be ſaid to be exerciſed or diſplayed, either here or hereafter.

2dly, It is proper farther to obſerve, that what Lord Bolingbroke hath offered with ſo much pomp for vindicating the proceedings of divine providence in the preſent conſtitution of things, hath nothing in it that can be called new, or which had not been ſaid as well, or better, by Chriſtian divines and philoſophers before him. They have frequently ſhewn, that this preſent world is full of the effects and inſtances of the divine goodneſs: That many of thoſe that are called natural evils are the effects of wiſe general laws, which are beſt upon the whole: That the evils of this life are, for the moſt part, tolerable, and overbalanced by the bleſſings beſtowed upon us, which, ordinarily ſpeaking, are much ſuperior to thoſe evils: That in the preſent conſtitution, virtue has a manifeſt tendency, in the ordinary courſe of things, to produce happineſs, and vice miſery; and that this conſtitution is the effect of a wiſe and good providence; from whence it may be concluded, that the great Author and Governor of the world approves the one, and diſapproves the other; So that it may be juſtly ſaid in general, that good and virtuous perſons enjoy more true ſatisfaction and happineſs, even in this preſent life, than the bad and vicious. Divines may ſay much more on this head than this author could conſiſtently do. They maintain a providence which extends even to the individuals of the human race: That good men may conſider themſelves as continually under God's wiſe and fatherly care and inſpection: That they may regard the good things they enjoy as the effects of his goodneſs, and are provided with the propereſt conſolations and ſupports under all the evils of this preſent life, being perſuaded that God, who knoweth their circumſtances, will over-rule all theſe things for their benefit; and that they are part of the diſcipline appointed to prepare them for a better ſtate; the proſpects of which diffuſe joy and comfort through all the gloomy ſcenes of adverſity they may here meet with. But in his ſcheme there is no ſolid foundation for that tranquillity of mind, of which he ſpeaks in ſuch high terms, as the inſeparable companion of virtue, and for that hope, which, he ſays, gives a reliſh to all the comforts, and takes off the bitter reliſh from all the

the misfortunes of life. If providence doth not concern itself about individuals, the good man hath no effectual support under his calamities. And it is worthy of observation, that our author himself, in vindicating the justice and goodness of providence in this present state, is sometimes obliged to have recourse to the hypothesis of a particular providence. Some of the answers he puts in the mouth of Balbus, as what he might have opposed to Cotta's harangue against providence, proceed upon the supposition of a providence which hath a regard to the cases and circumstances of individuals*. And with regard to public calamities, one of the ways he takes of accounting for them is this, that "they may be considered as chastisements, when there are "any to be amended by partaking in them, or being spectators "of them.—And that they should teach mankind to adore and "fear that providence, which governs the world by *particular* "as well as general dispensations†."

A third reflection is this: That though it be very true in general, that, in the present constitution of things, virtue hath a manifest tendency to promote our happiness, and vice to produce misery, yet it cannot be denied, that it often happeneth in particular cases, that as to the outward dispensations of providence, there is not a constant and remarkable difference made between the righteous and the wicked here on earth: That persons of eminent virtue have frequently been overwhelmed with evils and calamities of various kinds, and have perished under them, without any recompence of that virtue, if there be no future state: And that wicked men have often been remarkably prosperous, and have met with great success in their undertakings, and have continued prosperous to the end of their lives. These things have been observed in all ages. And accordingly he expressly owns, that "the ancient theists were persuaded, that no-"thing less than the existence of all mankind in a future state, "and a more exact distribution of rewards and punishments, "could excuse the assumed, irregular, and unjust proceedings "of providence in this life, on which atheists founded their ob-"jections‡." He frequently intimates, that this was one great

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 412. † Ibid. p. 380, 381.
‡ Ibid. p. 308.

reaſon of the philoſophers aſſuming the doctrine of future rewards and puniſhments: though ſometimes he ſeems to contradict this, and to ſay, that the heathens did not take in the hypotheſis of a future ſtate in order to vindicate the conduct of divine providence*. But without endeavouring to reconcile this writer to himſelf, which it is often impoſſible to do, we may proceed upon it as a certain thing, that it hath been generally acknowledged in all ages, that good men have been often in a very calamitous condition in this preſent ſtate, and bad men in very proſperous circumſtances. It is true, that, as our author obſerves, we may be deceived, and think thoſe to be good men who are not ſo: but in many caſes we may certainly pronounce, that thoſe who by their actions plainly ſhew themſelves to be bad men, the unjuſt, the fraudulent, the cruel, and oppreſſive, proſper and flouriſh, whilſt men, whom it were the height of uncharitableneſs not to ſuppoſe perſons of great goodneſs, integrity, and generous honeſty, ſuffer even by their very virtues, and are expoſed to grievous oppreſſions and reproach, without any redreſs from human judicatories. It is his own obſervation, that, "there is room for "much contingency in the phyſical and moral world, under the "government of a general providence, and that amidſt theſe con-"tingencies, happineſs, outward happineſs at leaſt, may fall to "the lot of the wicked, and outward unhappineſs to the lot of "good men †."

Mr. Hume has repreſented this matter with ſpirit and elegance in the twenty-firſt of his moral and political Eſſays; where he obſerves, that "though virtue be undoubtedly the beſt choice "where it can be attained, yet ſuch is the confuſion and diſ-"order of human affairs, that no perfect œconomy, or regular "diſtribution of happineſs or miſery, is in this life ever to be "expected. Not only are the goods of fortune, and endowments "of the body, unequally diſtributed between the virtuous and "the vicious; but the moſt worthy character, by the very œco-"nomy of the paſſions, doth not always enjoy the higheſt felicity. "Though all vice is pernicious, the diſturbance or pain is not "meaſured out by nature with exact proportion to the degrees "of vice: nor is the man of higheſt virtue, even abſtracting

* Compare vol. v. 238. 487. † Ibid. p. 485.

"from

" from external accidents, always the moſt happy. A gloomy " and melancholy temper may be found in very worthy characters " that have a great ſenſe of honour and integrity; and yet this " alone may embitter life, and render a perſon completely miſer- " able. On the other hand, a ſelfiſh villain may poſſeſs a ſpring " and alacrity of temper, a certain gaiety of heart, which will " compenſate the uneaſineſs and remorſe ariſing from all the " other vices. If a man be liable to a vice or imperfection, it " may often happen, that a good quality which he poſſeſſes along " with it, will render him more miſerable, than if he were com- " pletely vicious. A ſenſe of ſhame in an imperfect character is " certainly a virtue, but produces great uneaſineſs and remorſe, " from which the abandoned villain is entirely free*."

Though I lay no great ſtreſs on Mr. Hume's authority, yet I believe this repreſentation will be acknowledged to be agreeable to obſervation and experience. And if it be ſo, what can be more natural or reaſonable, than the hypotheſis of a future ſtate, where the rewards of virtue, and puniſhments of vice, ſhall be more equally and regularly proportioned than they can ordinarily be in this preſent ſtate?

It is hard to produce an inſtance of groſſer calumny and abuſe than our author is guilty of, when he advanceth it as a general charge againſt the Chriſtian divines, that " they have made a " common cauſe with atheiſts to attack providence, and to mur- " mur againſt the neceſſary ſubmiſſion that they pay." And he gives it as the character of the *Chriſtian*, that " he goes " murmuring and complaining through this life againſt the juſtice " of God, and therefore deſerves little to taſte of his goodneſs in " a future ſtate†." But this is ſtrangely miſrepreſented. The Chriſtian, inſtructed by the holy Scriptures, believes, that God is perfectly juſt and righteous in all his ways: He is taught to regard all the good things he enjoys as flowing from God's paternal

* Hume's moral and political Eſſays, p. 244, 245.

† Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 486. It is in the ſame ſpirit of miſrepreſentation and abuſe, that he thinks fit to charge Chriſtians with aſſuming, that happineſs conſiſts principally in health, and the advantages of fortune, and with pretending " to keep an account with God, and to barter ſo much " virtue, and ſo many acts of devotion, againſt ſo many degrees of honour, " power, or riches." Vol. v. p. 401, 402.

benignity; all the evils and afflictions he endures, as ordered and governed for the moſt wiſe and righteous ends. If there be any thing in the divine diſpenſations at preſent, which he cannot well account for, or reconcile, he is far from accuſing God, or entertaining a hard thought of his juſtice or goodneſs. He believes, that theſe things are all wiſely ordered, or permitted: that they are what may be expected in a ſtate of trial and diſcipline, and make a part of the ſcheme of divine providence, which will appear, when the whole comes to be viewed in its proper connection and harmony, to have been ordered with the moſt perfect wiſdom, righteouſneſs, and goodneſs. This preſent ſtate only makes a part of the glorious plan; and they are the perſons that defame and miſrepreſent providence, who are for ſeparating and disjointing the admirable ſcheme. What a ſtrange perverſion is it to repreſent the hope and expectation which Chriſtians entertain of a future ſtate, as arguing a bad temper of mind, and tending to render them unworthy to taſte of the divine goodneſs hereafter! As if it were a fault and a vice to aſpire to a ſtate where our nature ſhall be raiſed to the perfection of holineſs and virtue, where true piety ſhall receive its proper and full reward, and the glory of the divine perfections ſhall be moſt illuſtriouſly diſplayed.

As to the nature and extent of theſe future rewards and puniſhments, they will come more properly to be conſidered, when I come to examine the objections he hath advanced againſt the accounts that are given of them in the goſpel.

The only thing farther which I ſhall at preſent take notice of is, the uſe which he makes of that maxim, that *Whatſoever is, is right.* He inſinuates as if Chriſtian divines were not for acknowledging, that whatſoever God does is right; which he looks upon to be a moſt certain and important principle; and that upon this principle we ought to reſt ſatisfied, that what is done in this preſent ſtate is right, without looking forward to a future ſtate, or taking it into the account at all.

For the explaining the principle our author mentions, *Whatſoever is, is right*, it muſt be obſerved, that it is not to be applied to every particular incident conſidered independently, and as confined to the preſent moment, without any dependence on what went before, or follows after. The maxim would not be true or

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juſt, taken in this view. The meaning therefore muſt be, that whatever is, conſidered as a part of the univerſal ſcheme of providence, and taken in its proper harmony and connexion with the paſt and future, as well as with the preſent appointed courſe of things, is rightly and fitly ordered. Thus, *e. g.* ſuppoſe a good man reduced to the greateſt miſery and diſtreſs, and conflicting with the foreſt evils and calamities, it is fit he ſhould be ſo, becauſe, conſidering that event in its connexion, and taking in the paſt and future, it is permitted or appointed for wiſe reaſons, and is therefore beſt upon the whole: but conſidered independently, and as no part of the ſcheme of providence, or as ſeparated from the other parts of that ſcheme, it is not in itſelf the beſt nor fitteſt. This maxim therefore, which this writer makes uſe of with a view to ſet aſide a future ſtate, is, if underſtood in that ſenſe in which alone it is true, perfectly conſiſtent with the belief of a future ſtate, and even leadeth us to the acknowledgment of it. If we believe that God always does that which is fitteſt to be done, and yet meet with ſome things which we find it hard to reconcile to our ideas of the divine wiſdom, righteouſneſs, and goodneſs, our perſuaſion, that he always does that which is right, will put us upon endeavouring to reconcile thoſe appearances: and if a probable hypotheſis offers for reconciling them, it is perfectly conſiſtent with the veneration we owe to the Deity to embrace that hypotheſis; eſpecially if it be not arbitrary, but hath a real foundation in the nature of things: and ſuch is the hypotheſis of a future ſtate of retributions. There is great reaſon to believe, that the thinking principle in man is an immaterial ſubſtance, quite diſtinct from the body, and which ſhall not be diſſolved with it: and there are many things that ſeem to ſhew, he was not deſigned merely for this preſent tranſitory life on earth. The ſtrong deſire of immortality, ſo natural to the human mind; the vaſt capacities and faculties of the human ſoul, capable of making an immortal progreſs in knowledge, wiſdom, and virtue, compared with the ſmall advances we have an opportunity of making in this preſent ſtate; our being formed moral agents, accountable creatures, which ſeems plainly to ſhew, that it was deſigned by the Author of our beings, and who hath given us a law for the rule of our duty, that we ſhould be hereafter called to an account for our conduct; of which we

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have ſome forebodings in the judgment our own conſciences naturally paſs upon our actions: theſe, and other things that might be mentioned, ſeem to ſhew, that man was not deſigned merely for this preſent ſtate. And ſince there are ſeveral reaſons which leads us to look upon a future ſtate of exiſtence as probable, it is a moſt natural thought, that then the ſeeming inequalities of this preſent ſtate will be rectified; and that the conſideration of that ſtate is to be taken in, in forming a judgment concerning God's providential diſpenſations. And if with all this there be an expreſs revelation from God, aſſuring us of a future ſtate, the evidence is complete, and there is all the reaſon in the world to draw an argument from that ſtate to ſolve preſent contrary appearances.

I am yours, &c.

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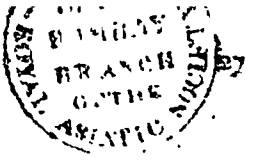

LETTER XXVI.

Obſervations on Lord Bolingbroke's Account of the Law of Nature—He aſſerts it to be ſo plain and obvious to the meaneſt Underſtanding, that Men cannot be miſtaken about it—The contrary ſhewn from his own Acknowledgment—He makes Self-Love the only original Spring from which our moral Duties and Affections flow: yet ſuppoſes univerſal Benevolence to be the fundamental Law of our Nature—He declares that we are obliged by the Law of Nature to place our Hope and Truſt in God, and addreſs ourſelves to him—This ſhewn to be inconſiſtent with the Principles he had advanced—He aſſerts Polygamy to be founded in the Law of Nature—He will not allow, that there is any ſuch thing as natural Shame or Modeſty. The Account he gives of the Sanctions of the Law of Nature, conſidered—He admits no Sanctions of that Law with reſpect to Individuals—The ill Conſequences of his Scheme to the Intereſts of Morality and Virtue, repreſented.

SIR,

FROM the obſervations that have been made in the foregoing letters, I think it ſufficiently appears, that Lord Bolingbroke hath endeavoured to ſubvert, or at leaſt to perplex and confound, ſome of the main principles of what is uſually called natural religion. I ſhall now proceed to examine the account he hath given of the law of nature, conſidered as a rule of duty. He frequently ſpeaks in the higheſt terms of the clearneſs, the ſufficiency, and perfection of that law. He repreſents it as the only ſtanding revelation of the will of God to mankind, and which renders every other revelation needleſs. Very learned and able men have treated of the law of nature: but our author ſeems not at all ſatisfied with what they have written on that ſubject. He ſays, "they have been more intent to ſhew their learning and acute-"neſs, than to ſet their ſubject in a clear and ſufficient light:—"That, inſtead of ſetting up a light ſufficient to enlighten a large "room, they go about with a ſmall taper, and, whilſt they illumi-"nate one corner, darken the reſt:—That they puzzle and per-

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" plex the plaineſt thing in the world, ſometimes by citations " little to the purpoſe, or of little authority; ſometimes by a " great apparatus of abſtract reaſoning, and by dint of explana- " tion.—Read Selden and Grotius, read Cumberland, read Puf- " fendorf, if you have leiſure or patience for it.—There are many " curious reſearches, no doubt, and many excellent obſervations " in theſe writers; but they ſeem to be great writers on this ſub- " ject, by much the ſame right as he might be called a great " traveller who ſhould go from London to Paris by the *Cape of* " *Good Hope**." I think it is not eaſy to convey a more contemptible idea of any writers, than he hath here done of theſe great men. It is to be ſuppoſed therefore, that he propoſes to lead men a more clear and direct way to the knowledge of the law of nature; eſpecially ſince he hath declared, that " all that " can be ſaid to any real or uſeful purpoſe concerning that law, " is extremely plain †."

Beſides occaſional paſſages in which he makes mention of the law of nature, this is the principal ſubject of ſeveral of the Fragments and Eſſays of which his fifth volume conſiſts, particularly of the third, fifth, ſixth, ſeventh, eighth, ninth, ſixteenth, ſeventeenth, eighteenth, and twenty-ſecond, of theſe Fragments and Eſſays. But all theſe together are far from making up any thing that can with the leaſt propriety be called a treatiſe on the law of nature; and, as his Lordſhip generally ſeems to think himſelf above treating things in a methodical way, we are left to collect his ſentiments by comparing ſeveral parts of his works together, and forming a judgment as well as we can. He has neither diſtinctly explained the principles of that law, nor purſued thoſe principles to their regular conſequences, nor formed any deductions from them that can be of great uſe for the direction and inſtruction of mankind.

As to the law of nature in general, he tells us, that " the law " of nature is the law of reaſon. A right uſe of that faculty " which God hath given us, collects that law from the nature of " things, as they ſtand in the ſyſtem which he has conſtituted ‡." Or, as he elſewhere expreſſeth it, " It is a law which God has " given to all his human creatures, enacted in the conſtitution of

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 68. † Ibid. p. 67. ‡ Ibid. p. 83.

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" their natures, and diſcernible by the uſe of the faculties he has " given them*." He calls it, " the revelation God has made of " his will by his works. And what is the will of God," ſaith he, " is a queſtion eaſily anſwered. To anſwer this, we need go no " higher than the moral obligations that ariſe in our own ſyſtem, " and of which we have very adequate ideas. The nature of " the human ſyſtem is independent on man, and yet he is obliged " to derive the rules of his conduct from it. By employing our " reaſon to collect the will of God from the fund of our nature " phyſical and moral, and by contemplating frequently and ſeri- " ouſly the laws that are plainly and neceſſarily deducible from " them, we may acquire not only a particular knowledge of thoſe " laws, but a general, and, in ſome ſort, an habitual knowledge " of the manner in which God is pleaſed to exerciſe his ſupreme " power in this ſyſtem, beyond which we have no concern†."

This law he repreſents as abſolutely certain, and obvious to all mankind. " Natural revelation (for ſo," ſaith he, " I will call " it) produces knowledge, a ſeries of intuitive knowledge from " the firſt principles to the laſt concluſions. The phænomena " of nature are the firſt principles: and reaſon, *i. e.* a real di- " vine illumination, leads us from one neceſſary truth to ano- " ther, through the whole courſe of theſe demonſtrations.— " In all theſe caſes we know, we do not believe‡." He aſſerts, that " we more certainly know the will of God in this way " than we can know it in any other§." " And that the tables of " the natural law are hung up in the works of God, and are ob- " vious to the ſight of all men, ſo obvious that no man who is " able to read the plaineſt characters can miſtake them‖." And accordingly he declares, that " the will of God, ſignified by " the law of nature, and revealed by his works, is a revelation " that admits of no doubt, and ſhews the road to happineſs to " all mankind**." I ſhall only mention one paſſage more, among many that might be produced to the ſame purpoſe. Having aſſerted, that " natural religion is the original revelation " which God has made of himſelf, and of his will, to all mankind

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 99. † Ibid. p. 100. 154. 178. 196. 271.
‡ Ibid. vol. iv. p. 276. § Ibid. p. 287.
‖ Ibid. vol. v. p. 153. ** Ibid. p. 196.

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" in the conſtitution of things, and in the order of his provi-
" dence; he obſerves, that human reaſon is able to diſcover in
" the original revelation every conceivable duty that we owe to
" God as our Creator, and to man as our fellow creature: that
" this ſyſtem of duty is fully proportioned by infinite wiſdom
" to the human ſtate, and to the end of its human happineſs.—
" Natural religion therefore is relatively perfect: it is immutable:
" as long as God and man continue to be what they are, and
" to ſtand in the ſame relations to one another." He adds,
" if it does not follow neceſſarily from this, ſure I am that it
" follows probably, that God has made no other revelation of
" himſelf and of his will to mankind *. This is evidently the main point our author had in view, in extolling ſo mightily as he has done the abſolute perfection, certainty, and clearneſs of the law of nature.

From the ſeveral paſſages which have been produced, it appears, that by the law of nature he underſtands what we may collect by our reaſon, concerning the will of God and our duty, from the conſideration of his works, but eſpecially from the conſtitution of the human ſyſtem, or, as he expreſſeth it, from the fund of our nature, phyſical and moral. Let us therefore inquire what account he gives of the human ſyſtem. He obſerves, that " man has two principles of determination, affections,
" and paſſions, excited by apparent good, and reaſon, which is
" a ſluggard, and cannot be ſo excited. Reaſon muſt be willed
" into action; and as this can rarely happen, when the will is
" already determined by affections and paſſions, ſo when it does
" happen, a ſort of compoſition generally happens between the
" two principles: and if the affections and paſſions cannot govern
" abſolutely, they obtain more indulgence from reaſon than they
" deſerve, or than ſhe would ſhew them if ſhe were entirely free
" from their force, and free from their conduct †." He expreſsly declares, that " the appetites, paſſions, and the immediate ob-
" jects of pleaſure, will be always of greater force to determine
" us than reaſon ‡;" and that " amidſt the contingencies that
" muſt ariſe from the conſtitution of every individual, he needs

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 543, 544.
† Ibid. p. 150. See alſo ibid. p. 116. 137. 227. ‡ Ibid. p. 267, 268.

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" not go about to prove that the odds will always be on the ſide " of appetite; from which affections ariſe, as affections grow up " afterwards into paſſions, which reaſon cannot always ſubdue " in the ſtrongeſt minds, and by which ſhe is perpetually ſubdued " in the weakeſt*." At the ſame time that he ſpeaks in ſuch ſtrong terms of the great power and prevalency of the appetites and paſſions, he will not allow that the Creator hath implanted in the human mind any thing that can be called a natural ſenſe of good and evil, of right or wrong. He treats thoſe as enthuſiaſts in ethics, and as rendering natural religion ridiculous, who maintain, that there is " a moral ſenſe or inſtinct, by which men " diſtinguiſh what is morally good from what is morally evil, " and perceive an agreeable or diſagreeable intellectual ſenſation " accordingly†." " This," he ſays, " may be acquired in ſome " ſort by long habit, and by true philoſophical devotion, but that " it is whimſical to aſſume it to be natural‡."

And now we may form ſome judgment, how far our author's declarations concerning the abſolute clearneſs, as well as certainty, of the law of nature, are to be depended on, which he makes with a view to ſhew that all extraordinary revelation is entirely needleſs.

He tells us, that " the law of nature has all the clearneſs, all " the preciſion that God can give, or man deſire;" which he proves, becauſe " the nature of our ſyſtem, as far as the mora- " lity of actions is concerned, is ſufficiently known to us, and " the laws of our nature conſequently, ſince they reſult from " it§." It is to be obſerved, that the clearneſs and preciſion he here attributes to the law of nature is ſuppoſed by him to be of ſuch a kind as to be obvious to all mankind. And the only way he allows to any of the human race for knowing that law and his own duty, is by ſending him, for information concerning it to the works of God, and eſpecially to the human ſyſtem, and the laws that reſult from it. And is this ſo eaſy a taſk to every man, even the moſt illiterate? Can it be ſaid that this is, as he affirms, " intelligible at all times, and in all places alike, and pro- " portioned to the meaneſt underſtanding‖?" Is every man

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 479. † Ibid. p. 86.
‡ Ibid. p. 479. § Ibid. p. 26. 97. ‖ Ibid. p. 94.

well,

well qualified to ſearch into the *fund of his nature, phyſical and moral*, and to form his concluſions accordingly, and draw up a ſyſtem of religion, of laws and rules for his own conduct? How can he conſiſtently ſuppoſe, that the human ſyſtem is ſufficiently known to all, when according to him ſome of the wiſeſt men in all ages, and mankind in general, have been miſtaken even in a point of ſuch importance relating to it, as the ſuppoſing the ſoul to be a diſtinct ſubſtance from the body? Beſides which, the knowledge of the human ſyſtem takes in a due conſideration of our ſenſes, reaſon, appetites, and paſſions. All theſe muſt be conſidered, that we may know wherein conſiſteth the proper order and harmony of our powers, which of them are to be ſubordinate, and which to govern; what are the juſt limits of our appetites and paſſions; how far and in what inſtances they are to be gratified, and how far reſtrained. And is every particular perſon, if left to himſelf, able by the mere force of his own reaſon to conſider and compare all theſe, and from thence to make the proper deductions, and acquire a *particular knowledge*, as our author requires, of thoſe laws that are deducible from this ſyſtem?

He has another remarkable paſſage to the ſame purpoſe, which it may be proper to take ſome notice of. "Whether the word of "God," ſaith he, "be his word, may be, and hath been diſputed "by theiſts: but whether the works of God be his works, "neither has been nor can be diſputed by any ſuch. Natural "religion therefore being founded on human nature, which is the "work of God, and the neceſſary conditions of human happineſs, "which are impoſed by the whole ſyſtem of it, every man who "receives the law of nature receives it on his own authority, "and not on the authority of other men known or unknown, "and in their natural ſtate as fallible as himſelf. It is not commu-"nicated to him only by tradition and hiſtory: it is a perpetual "ſtanding revelation, always made, always making, and as preſent "in theſe days as in the days of Adam to all his offſpring*." Here every man is directed, in forming a ſcheme of the law of nature for himſelf, to deſpiſe all other authority, and rely wholly on his own. It is even mentioned as an advantage, that he receives it on his own authority, *i. e.* that he has no other proof or

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 92.

authority

authority for it, but the deductions he himſelf forms by his own reaſon: though that reaſon is, as this writer owns, for the moſt part influenced and overborne by the appetites and paſſions.—And this is cried up as a ſtanding revelation to all the ſons of Adam. But if we apply this magnificent talk concerning the divine certainty and clearneſs of the law of nature, to what our author plainly intends by it, the deductions drawn by every man for himſelf concerning his duty, and what he thinks moſt conducive to his happineſs, the fallacy of his way of arguing will immediately appear: for though the works of God are certainly the works of God, and it will not be denied that the human nature is his work, it doth not follow that the concluſions formed by every particular perſon, from that nature, and from the works of God, concerning duty and moral obligation, are to be certainly depended upon. When therefore he aſſerts, that "the "contents of the law of nature are objects of ſuch a certainty, "as the author of nature alone can communicate*," if the deſign be to ſignify, that the judgment every man forms for himſelf by his own reaſon, and upon his own authority, as he expreſſeth it, concerning the law of nature, hath ſuch a divine certainty in it, it is manifeſtly falſe. He confounds the objective certainty of the law as founded in the nature of things, with the certainty of the judgment men form concerning it: which are very different things. However certain the law of nature is in itſelf, men may greatly miſtake and miſapprehend it. And it is certain in fact that they do ſtand in great need of particular inſtruction to enable them to acquire a right knowledge of it. And ſurely a divine inſtruction concerning it, by perſons extraordinarily ſent and commiſſioned to publiſh a revelation of the will of God to mankind, and who give ſufficient proofs of their divine miſſion, muſt be of the higheſt advantage.

This writer himſelf, though he ſo often extols the abſolute clearneſs, certainty, and perfection of the law of nature, *i. e.* of the judgment men form by reaſon concerning it; yet at other times makes acknowledgments which quite deſtroy the argument he would draw from it againſt the neceſſity or uſefulneſs of extraordinary revelation. He had affirmed in a paſſage cited above,

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 23.

that "natural revelation (for ſo," ſays he, "I will call it) produces "a ſeries of intuitive knowledge from the firſt principles to the "laſt concluſions;" where he ſeems to make both the great principles of the law of nature, and the concluſions that are drawn from it, to be infallibly certain: and yet he elſewhere declares that the laws of nature are general, and intimates that a multitude of falſe deductions and wrong applications have been often made of that law*. Among ſeveral paſſages to this purpoſe, there is one that deſerves particular notice. After having ſaid, that "it "is in vain to attempt to know any thing more than God has "ſhewed us in the actual conſtitution of things," he adds, that "even when we judge of them thus, and make particular appli- "cations of the general laws of nature, we are very liable "to miſtakes.—That there are things fit and unfit, right and "wrong, juſt and unjuſt, in the human ſyſtem, and diſcernible "by human reaſon, as far as our natural imperfections admit, I "acknowledge moſt readily. But from the difficulty we have "to judge, and from the uncertainty of our judgments in a mul- "titude of caſes which lie beyond our bounds, I would demon- "ſtrate the folly of thoſe who affect to have knowledge beyond "them. They are unable on many occaſions to deduce from "the conſtitution of their own ſyſtem, and the laws of their own "nature, with preciſion and certainty, what theſe require of "them; and what is right or wrong, juſt or unjuſt, for them to "do†." To this may be added the acknowledgment he hath made, that "the law of nature is hid from our ſight by all the variegated "clouds of civil laws and cuſtoms. Some gleams of true light "may be ſeen through them: but they render it a dubious light, "and it can be no better to thoſe who have the keeneſt ſight, "till thoſe interpoſitions are removed‡." So that after all his boaſts, as if the law of nature were ſo clear and obvious to all men that they cannot miſtake it, he owns it to have been *hid from our ſight* by the clouds of civil laws and cuſtoms, and that it is rendered a *dubious light* even to thoſe *who have the keeneſt ſight.* And ſurely nothing can be more proper to remove and diſpel theſe interpoſitions of contrary laws and cuſtoms, than the light of divine revelation, enforced by a divine authority. He himſelf

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 154. † Ibid. p. 444. ‡ Ibid. p. 105. obſerves,

obſerves, that "Euſebius, in his firſt book of his evangelical "preparation, gives a long catalogue of abſurd laws and cuſtoms, "contradictory to the law of nature in all ages and countries, "for a very good purpoſe, to ſhew in ſeveral inſtances, how "ſuch abſurd laws and cuſtoms as theſe have been reformed by "the goſpel, that is, by a law which renewed and confirmed the "original law of nature*."

Theſe obſervations may ſuffice with regard to what Lord Bolingbroke hath offered concerning the law of nature in general, and its abſolute certainty and clearneſs to all mankind: I ſhall now proceed to make ſome particular reflections on the account he gives of the contents of that law, or the duties which are there preſcribed: as alſo of the grounds of the obligation of that law, and the ſanction whereby it is enforced.

I. With regard to the contents or matter of the law of nature, he obſerves, that "ſelf-love, directed by inſtinct to mutual plea-"ſure, made the union between man and woman. Self-love "made that of parents and children: ſelf-love begat ſociability: "and reaſon, a principle of human nature as well as inſtinct, "improved it, and extended it to relations more remote, and "united ſeveral families into one community, as inſtinct had "united ſeveral individuals into one family." See the third of his Fragments and Eſſays in his fifth volume. And he treats this more largely in the ſixth of thoſe Eſſays, where he obſerves, that "there is ſuch a thing as natural reaſon implanted in us by "the author of our nature: but that reaſon would come too "ſlowly to regulate the conduct of human life, if the All-wiſe "Creator had not implanted in us another principle, that of ſelf-"love; which is the original ſpring of human actions, under the "direction of inſtinct firſt, and reaſon afterwards†."—"That "inſtinct and reaſon may be conſidered as diſtinct promulgations "of the ſame law. Self-love directs neceſſarily to ſociability.— "Inſtinct leads us to it by the ſenſe of pleaſure, and reaſon con-"firms us in it by a ſenſe of happineſs‡."——"Sociability is "the foundation of human happineſs: ſociety cannot be main-"tained without benevolence, juſtice, and other ſocial virtues. "Thoſe virtues therefore are the foundation of ſociety. And "thus are we led from the inſtinctive to the rational law of na-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 100, 101. † Ibid. p. 79.
‡ Ibid. p. 80, 81.

"ture.——Self-love operates in all thoſe ſtages. We love our-
"ſelves, we love our families, we love the particular ſocieties
"to which we belong: and our benevolence extends at laſt to
"the whole race of mankind. Like ſo many different vortices,
"the centre of all is ſelf-love: and that which is the moſt diſtant
"from it is the weakeſt *."

It appears from this account of the law of nature, that he makes ſelf-love to be the *original ſpring* of all human actions, the fundamental principle of the law of nature, and centre of the moral ſyſtem, to which all the lines of it tend, and in which they terminate: and yet he elſewhere calls "univerſal benevo-
"lence, benevolence to all rational beings, the great and funda-
"mental principle of the law of nature †:" and aſſerts, that "the
"firſt principle of the religion of nature and reaſon is a ſocia-
"bility that flows from univerſal benevolence ‡." In the paſſages above cited, he had expreſsly affirmed, that ſelf-love begets ſociability, and had reſolved benevolence into ſelf-love as the original principle from which it flows: but here he makes ſociability to flow from univerſal benevolence. I do not well ſee how this can be made to conſiſt upon his ſcheme. Thoſe may juſtly regard univerſal benevolence as a fundamental law of our nature, who ſuppoſe a ſocial principle, and a benevolent diſpoſition, diſtinct from ſelf-love, to be an original diſpoſition, natural to the human heart, and implanted by the Author of our beings: but if ſelf-love be, as he repreſents it, the only original ſpring of human actions, and the centre of the whole ſyſtem, univerſal benevolence cannot be properly repreſented as the fundamental law of our nature. Upon this ſcheme the private intereſt of the individual, whenever it happens to come in competition with the public good, ought to be preferred. Lord Bolingbroke endeavours to anſwer Carneades's argument againſt juſtice, who urged, that "either there is no ſuch thing as juſtice, or it would
"be extremely fooliſh, becauſe that in providing for the good of
"others, the juſt would hurt themſelves §." This argument ſeems to me to be concluſive upon his Lordſhip's ſcheme. For ſuppoſing, which ſeems to be his ſentiment, that there is no natural ſenſe of right and wrong, of moral beauty and deformity,

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 82.
† Ibid. vol. iv. p. 282. vol. v. p. 98. ‡ Ibid. p. 196. § Ibid. p. 103.

implanted

implanted in the human heart; and that at the ſame time a man is perſuaded that providence has no regard to individuals, to their actions, or the events which befal them; and that therefore he has nothing to hope or to fear from God; and that this life is the whole of his exiſtence: and if he is alſo made to think, that ſelf-love is the original ſpring of human actions, and the central point to which all muſt tend; and that a tendency to promote his own happineſs, his preſent happineſs, is what gives the law of nature its obligation, which, as ſhall be ſhewn, is what Lord Bolingbroke avows: upon theſe principles, if in any particular inſtance an unjuſt action may turn to his own advantage, and he knows he is ſafe in committing it, he is juſtified in doing that action, when a ſtrict regard to juſtice, or fidelity to his word and promiſe, would do him hurt. For his preſent advantage and intereſt in this uncertain life is what he is to have principally in view, and to which every thing elſe muſt be ſubordinate.

In the eleventh of his Fragments and Eſſays, in which he particularly treats of ſociability, he obſerves, that "it is owing to "our being determined by ſelf-love to ſeek our pleaſure and "utility in ſociety; and that when theſe ends are ſufficiently "anſwered, natural ſociability declines, and natural inſociabi-"lity commences. The influence of ſelf-love reaches no far-"ther: and when men are once formed into ſocieties, thoſe "ſocieties become individuals, and thus ſelf-love, which pro-"moted union among men, promotes diſcord among them*." So that, according to him, ſelf-love firſt produces ſociableneſs, and puts men upon forming ſocieties; and when ſocieties are once formed, this ſame ſelf-love produces unſociableneſs and diſcord between thoſe ſocieties. And if this be the caſe, I cannot ſee how he can maintain, as he ſometimes does, that univerſal benevolence flows from ſelf-love, when, according to his account of it, it is only a very limited ſociableneſs which is produced by ſelf-love; and ſelf-love, inſtead of promoting an univerſal benevolence, deſtroys it.

With regard to the particular duties included in the law of nature, there is little in theſe Eſſays that can be of uſe, either to ſhew what thoſe duties are, or how they are deducible from

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 115.

that law. What he ſaith on this head is for the moſt part very general.

As to the duties we owe to God, he obſerves, that "the reli-"gion and law of nature ſhews us the Supreme Being manifeſted "in all his works to be the true and only object of our adora-"tion: and that it teaches us to worſhip him in ſpirit and in "truth, that is, inwardly and ſincerely." But he ſeems to confine the worſhip preſcribed in that law to inward worſhip. He adds, that "in the exiſtence God has given us, and in the bene-"fits which attach us ſtrongly to it, this ſhews him to be the firſt "and greateſt object of our gratitude: and in the eſtabliſhed order "of things, ſubject to ſo many viciſſitudes, and yet ſo conſtant, "this religion ſhews him to be the reaſonable as well as neceſ-"ſary object of our reſignation: and finally, in the wants, diſ-"treſſes, and dangers which thoſe viciſſitudes bring frequently "upon us, to be the comfortable object of our hope—in which "hope, the religion of nature will teach us no doubt to addreſs "ourſelves to the Almighty, in a manner conſiſtent with an en-"tire reſignation to his will, as ſome of the heathens did*." Theſe are undoubtedly important duties. But it is not eaſy to ſee what plea there is for making God the comfortable object of our hope in the wants, diſtreſſes, and dangers we are expoſed to, or for addreſſing ourſelves to him in an entire reſignation to his will and to his providence, if he exerciſeth no care of individuals at all, nor concerneth himſelf about their actions, their particular caſes and circumſtances, in this preſent ſtate, nor will ever recompenſe their piety and virtue in a future one. The ſcheme our author hath advanced on theſe heads appeareth to me to be abſolutely inconſiſtent with what he himſelf here repreſenteth as important duties of the law of nature.

As to other particular duties required in that law, he ſays, "No "doubt can be entertained whether the law of nature forbids "idolatry, blaſphemy, murder, theft, and I think inceſt, at leaſt "in the higheſt inſtance of it†." Theſe things he only mentions; but that which he moſt largely inſiſts upon, as a precept of the law of nature, is polygamy. This is the ſubject of the ſeventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth, of his Fragments and

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. 97, 98. † Ibid. p. 156.

Eſſays.

Eſſays. The principal argument which he brings to prove that polygamy is agreeable to the law of nature, and is a duty bound upon us by that law, is, that it contributes to the increaſe and propagation of the human ſpecies. He owns that "monogamy, "or the confinement of one huſband to one wife while they both "live, will unite the care of both parents in breeding up ſub-"jects of the commonwealth:" but he aſſerts, that "it will "not ſerve as effectually, nor in as great numbers, to the be-"getting them*." But it would not be a hard matter to ſhew, that polygamy, if univerſally allowed (and it muſt be ſo if it were a law of nature), would not tend to the increaſe of mankind upon the whole, but the contrary†. Seeing if one man had many wives, ſeveral men muſt be without any, conſidering that providence has ordered ſuch an equality in numbers between the ſexes; and that, as hath been obſerved by thoſe who have examined this matter with the greateſt accuracy, there are generally more men born into the world than women. This ſhews, that in the order of nature, and according to the preſent conſtitution of things, more than one woman is not ordinarily deſigned for one man. And I believe it will ſcarce be denied to be probable, that twenty men married to twenty women would have more children among them, than one man married to twenty women. The conſtant ordinary courſe of providence throughout the world with reſpect to the proportion between the ſexes is, as Moſes repreſents it to have been in the beginning, one man to one woman. And it is obſervable, that according to his account, polygamy had no place either at the firſt original of the human race, or at the reparation of mankind immediately after the deluge, though in both theſe caſes the ſpeedy multiplication of the human ſpecies ſeemed to be neceſſary. If therefore we judge, as Lord Bolingbroke would have us judge, of the law of nature by the conſtitution of our ſyſtem, monogamy is more agreeable to that law, and a more perfect inſtitution than polygamy. But I ſhall have occaſion to reſume this ſubject, when I come to conſider his obſervations againſt the Chriſtian law on this account.

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 163.

† See concerning this the Rev. Dean Delany's excellent Reflections on Polygamy.

I do not find that he any-where repreſents adultery as a violation of the law of nature; he rather intimates the contrary, when he gives it as a reaſon why in Greece and Rome, and ſeveral other ſtates, a plurality of wives was prohibited, and monogamy encouraged, "becauſe, notwithſtanding their entering "into ſingle marriages, nothing hindered them, nor their wives "neither, except the want of opportunity, from indulging their "luſt with others in ſpite of their ſacred bonds, and the legal "property they had in one another's perſons." And he thinks it cannot be doubted that ſuch conſiderations have the ſame effect upon Chriſtians, who look upon thoſe marriages to have been inſtituted by God himſelf*. But I am perſuaded the ancient pagans would not have alleged or admitted the reaſon he gives for reconciling them to ſingle marriages: as if no man or woman entered into the marriage-bond, but with a reſolution to violate it as often as an opportunity offered. If that had been the caſe, adultery would not have been ſo infamous a thing, nor ſo ſeverely puniſhed, as it was in the beſt ages of Greece and Rome. Nor were adulteries common among them, till an univerſal diſſoluteneſs and corruption of manners prevailed, which prepared things by degrees for the diſſolution of their ſtate. He plainly ſuppoſes all men and women to be unchaſte; and that there is no ſuch thing as conjugal fidelity and chaſtity either among heathens or Chriſtians. Such a way of repreſenting things is generally looked upon as a ſuſpicious ſign of a vicious and corrupt heart, which judges of the reſt of mankind by its own depraved inclinations. And that his Lordſhip had no great notion of the virtue or obligation of chaſtity, farther appears from the account he gives of "the motives of that modeſty, with which almoſt all mankind, "even the moſt ſavage, conceal the parts, and remove out of "ſight to perform the act, of generation." He ſays, "the "latent principle of this ſhame or modeſty, is a vanity inherent "in our natures, which makes us fond of ſhewing how ſuperior "we are to other animals, and to hide how much we participate "of the ſame nature." As if the ſavage nations carried their refinements ſo far, which would be an argument againſt eating in open view, ſince in this we equally participate of the ſame

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 167.

nature

nature with other animals. He adds, that "an uncontrouled "and undiſturbed indulgence to their mutual luſt, is one of the "principal reaſons for the ſolitude wherein the two ſexes affect "to copulate." So that this ſhame and modeſty, which forbids public copulations of human creatures like brutes, is at laſt reſolved into an exceſſive prevalence of luſt. He concludes therefore, that "this ſhame is artificial, and has been inſpired by human "laws, by prejudice and the like*." As to inceſt, he ſeems to think the law of nature forbids none but that of the higheſt kind, *viz.* "the conjunction between fathers and daughters, ſons and "mothers:" and whether this is forbidden by that law he is not very poſitive; but inclines to think it is forbidden; not for any repugnancy or abhorrence in nature to ſuch copulations, which he treats as a pretence that ſcarce deſerves an anſwer, but becauſe "as parents are the chief magiſtrates of families, every "thing that tends to diminiſh a reverence for them, or to con-"vert it into ſome other ſentiment, diminiſhes their authority, "and diſſolves the order of theſe little commonwealths†." He mentions nations, "among whom no regard was paid to the de-"grees of conſanguinity and affinity, but brothers mixed with "ſiſters, fathers with their daughters, and ſons with their mo-"thers; That they were had in abomination by the Jews, who "were in return held in contempt by them and all others: That "two of theſe nations, the Egyptians and Babylonians, had "been maſters of the Jews in every ſenſe, and from whom the "Greeks and Romans derived all their knowledge; and perhaps "the firſt uſe of letters‡:" And he obſerves, that "Eve was in "ſome ſort the daughter of Adam. She was literally bone of his "bone, and fleſh of his fleſh§." This ſeems to be mentioned by him with a deſign to give ſome ſort of patronage for the conjunction between fathers and daughters. But Eve could with no propriety he called the daughter of Adam; though they might both be called the children of God: Adam did not beget or form Eve, but God formed them both‖.

He

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 174. † Ibid. p. 175.
‡ Ibid. p. 172, 173. 175. § Ibid. p. 176.
‖ Though our author ſeems in ſome of the paſſages above cited to ſpeak of this worſt kind of inceſt in ſoftening terms, which ſhew no great abhorrence of it, yet when he takes notice, in a ſneering way, of the *edifying anec-*

dote

He concludes, that "*increaſe* and *multiply* is the law of nature. The manner in which this precept ſhall be executed "with the greateſt advantage to ſociety, is the law of man." So that the only law of nature that he allows in this caſe, is the natural inſtinct to increaſe and multiply. Fornication, adultery, inceſt, are all left at large to political conſiderations, and human laws, and to what men ſhall think moſt for their pleaſure and the propagation of the ſpecies, without any divine law to reſtrain or regulate them: which is to open a wide door for a licentious indulgence to the carnal appetite.

The laſt thing I propoſe to conſider with regard to Lord Bolingbroke's account of the law of nature is, the ground of the obligation of that law, and the ſanctions whereby it is enforced.

As to the ground of its obligation, or from whence the obliging force of that law ariſes, he obſerves, that that which makes it properly obligatory is, not its being the will and appointment of God, but its being conducive to human happineſs. To this purpoſe he declares, that "though the Supreme Being willed "into exiſtence this ſyſtem, and by conſequence all the relations "of things contained in it; yet it is not this will, it is in truth "the conſtitution of the ſyſtem alone, that impoſes theſe laws on "mankind originally, whatever power made this ſyſtem."—— "The morality of actions," he thinks, "doth not conſiſt in this, "that they are preſcribed by will, even by the will of God: but "it is this, that they are the means, however impoſed the practice of them may be, of acquiring happineſs agreeable to our "nature," And he ſeems to find fault with thoſe who "think "there can be no law of nature, or at leaſt that it cannot paſs "for a law in the ſenſe of obliging and binding, without a God:" though he owns, that "it is more fully and effectually ſo to the "theiſt, than to the atheiſt*." But though he has here expreſsly declared, that it is not the will of God, but it is the conſtitution

date of Lot's daughters, he calls that inceſt a *monſtrous crime*, and intimateth as if, according to the Moſaic account, the goodneſs of their intention *ſanctified it*. Vol. v. p. 112. But Moſes contented himſelf with relating the fact as it really happened; nor can it poſſibly be ſuppoſed, that he had any deſign to ſanctify that crime, which is forbidden and condemned in his law in the ſtrongeſt terms, and cenſured as an *abomination*.

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 283, 284.

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of the human ſyſtem, which impoſes theſe laws originally on mankind; yet afterwards, in oppoſition to Grotius, he aſſerts the law of nature to be the *poſitive law of God in every ſenſe, a law of will*, and blames that great man, and others, for diſtinguiſhing between the law of nature, and the poſitive law of God to man *.

With regard to the ſanctions of the law of nature, he expreſsly affirms, that the penalties which make the ſanction of natural law, affect nations collectively, not men individually †. This is not an occaſional thought, but is a fixed part of his ſcheme, and which he frequently repeats ‡. The only penalties or ſanctions which he allows properly to belong to the law of nature, are the public evils which affect nations. With regard to particular perſons, there are no divine ſanctions to enforce that law. But the puniſhment of individuals is left wholly to the laws enacted by every community. And it is certain that there are many breaches of the natural law, which do not make men liable to any puniſhment by the civil laws. There is no puniſhment provided by thoſe laws, nor any, according to our author's account, by the law of nature, for ſecret crimes, however enormous: nor do theſe laws ever puniſh internal bad diſpoſitions, any vices of the heart, or irregular and corrupt affections. A man may be ſafely as wicked as he pleaſes, provided he can manage ſo as to eſcape puniſhment by the laws of his country, which very bad men, and thoſe that are guilty of great vices, may eaſily, and frequently do, evade. No other penalties has he to fear (for I do not find that he ever reckons inward remorſe or ſtings of conſcience among the ſanctions of the natural law), except he happens to be involved in national calamities; among which he mentions *oppreſſion, famine, peſtilence, wars*, and *captivities*; and in theſe it often happens, that good men as well as the wicked and vicious are involved. So that he allows no puniſhments as proper divine ſanctions of the law of nature, but what are common to thoſe that keep that law, as well as to thoſe who violate it. All that he offers to prove, that this divine ſanction, as he calls it, of the natural law is ſufficient, amounts to this, that the ſanctions of the law of Moſes, which is pretended to

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 87. † Ibid. p. 90.

‡ See particularly vol. iv. p. 288. vol. v. p. 472. 474. 494, 495.

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be a poſitive law given by God to his choſen people, conſiſted only in temporal pains and penalties, and thoſe only ſuch as affected the nation in general, and not individuals. This, as far as the law of Moſes is concerned, will be afterwards examined. At preſent I ſhall only obſerve, that it is a ſtrange way of arguing, to endeavour to prove, that the ſanction of the law of nature is divine; becauſe it is the ſame with the ſanction of the law of Moſes, which in our author's opinion was not divine*.

Allow me, before I conclude this letter, to make a brief repreſentation of that ſcheme of morality, or of the law of nature, which his Lordſhip's principles naturally lead to.

The rule he lays down for judging of the law of nature, or of moral obligation, is this: That man is to judge of it from his own nature, and the ſyſtem he is in. And man, according to his account of him, is merely a ſuperior animal, whoſe views are confined to this preſent life, and who has no reaſonable proſpect of exiſting in any other ſtate. God has given him appetites and paſſions: theſe appetites lead him to pleaſure, which is their only object. He has reaſon indeed: but this reaſon is only to enable him to provide and contrive what is moſt conducive to his happineſs; that is, what will yield him a *continued permanent ſeries of the moſt agreeable ſenſations or pleaſures*, which is the definition of happineſs†. And if no regard be had to futurity, he muſt govern himſelf by what he thinks moſt conducive to his intereſt, or his pleaſure, in his preſent circumſtances. The conſtitution of his nature is his only guide: God has given him no other, and concerns himſelf no farther about him, nor will ever call him to an account for his actions. In this conſtitution his fleſh or body is his all: there is no diſtinct immaterial principle; nor has he any moral ſenſe or feelings naturally implanted in his heart; and therefore to pleaſe the fleſh, and purſue its intereſt, or gratify its appetites and inclinations, muſt be his principal end. Only he muſt take care ſo to gratify them, as not to expoſe himſelf to the penalties of human laws, which are the only ſanctions of the law of nature for particular perſons. He may without any check of conſcience debauch his neighbour's wife, when he has an opportunity of doing it ſafely; and needs

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 91. † Ibid. p. 377, 378.

be

be under no reſtraint to the indulging his luſts, from ſhame or modeſty, which is only an *artificial thing*, owing to prejudice or pride. As to the refined ſentiments of ſubjecting the appetites to reaſon, or the ſubjecting a man's own private intereſt, or that of his family, to the public good of the community, this cannot be reaſonably done upon his ſcheme. It is urged indeed, that "the good of individuals is ſo cloſely connected with "the good of ſociety, that the means of promoting the one can-"not be ſeparated from thoſe of promoting the other*." But though it is generally ſo, yet it may happen in particular caſes, that theſe intereſts may be ſeparated. It may be more for a man's private intereſt to break the laws of his country: and if he can find his own private advantage, or gratify his ambition, his love of power, or of riches, in doing what is prejudicial to the community, there is nothing to reſtrain him from it, provided he can do it ſafely: for ſelf-love is the centre of the whole moral ſyſtem, and the more extended the circle is, the weaker it grows. So that the love of a man's country muſt be far weaker than his love of himſelf, or regard to his own particular intereſt, which muſt be his ſupreme governing principle and end.

But I ſhall not purſue this any farther. How far ſuch a ſyſtem of morals would be for the good of mankind, it is eaſy to ſee; and it ſeems to me fairly deducible from Lord Bolingbroke's principles taken in their juſt connection, though I do not pretend to charge his Lordſhip with expreſsly acknowledging or avowing all theſe conſequences; and ſometimes he advances what is inconſiſtent with them.

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 103.

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LETTER XXVII.

An Examination of what Lord Bolingbroke hath offered concerning Revelation in general—He aſſerts that Mankind had no Need of an extraordinary Revelation—The contrary fully ſhewn—A divine Revelation very needful to inſtruct Men in the moſt important Principles of Religion, eſpecially thoſe relating to the Unity, the Perfections, and Providence of God; the Worſhip that is to be rendered to him; moral Duty taken in its juſt Extent; the chief Good and Happineſs of Man; the Terms of our Acceptance with God, and the Means of Reconciliation when we have offended him; and the Rewards and Puniſhments of a future State—It may be concluded from the Neceſſities of Mankind, that a Revelation was communicated from the Beginning—A Notion and Belief of this has very generally obtained—The wiſeſt Men of Antiquity ſenſible that bare Reaſon alone is not ſufficient to enforce Doctrines and Laws with a due Authority upon Mankind.—The moſt celebrated Philoſophers acknowledged their Want of divine Revelation—The Author's Exceptions againſt this examined—Under Pretence of extolling the great Effects which a true divine Revelation muſt have produced, he endeavours to ſhew, that no true divine Revelation was ever really given—His Scheme tends, contrary to his own Intention, to ſhew the Uſefulneſs and Neceſſity of divine Revelation.

SIR,

ANY one that reads Lord Bolingbroke's Works with attention muſt be convinced, that one principal deſign he had in view, was to deſtroy the authority of the divine revelation in general, and of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian in particular. I ſhall conſider what he hath offered with regard to each of theſe; and ſhall begin with what relates to divine revelation in general.

As to the poſſibility of an extraordinary revelation communicated from God to men, his Lordſhip hath no-where thought fit expreſsly to deny it: though he hath made ſome attempts which ſeem to look that way. He frequently treats the notion of communion

munion with God and communications from God to men, as a great abſurdity, and the ſuppoſition of which is wholly owing to the pride of the human heart; and has declared, that he cannot "comprehend the metaphyſical or phyſical influence of ſpirits, "ſuggeſtions, ſilent communications, injection of ideas.—And "that all ſuch interpoſitions in the intellectual ſyſtem cannot be "conceived, without altering, in every ſuch inſtance, the natural "progreſſion of the human underſtanding, and the freedom of the "will*." Yet in a long digreſſion about inſpiration, in his *Eſſay concerning the Nature, Extent, and Reality, of Human Knowledge*, after having done what he could to expoſe and ridicule it, he expreſsly owns, that "an extraordinary action of God on the "human mind, which the word inſpiration is here uſed to denote, "is not more inconceivable than the ordinary action of mind on "body, or of body on mind."—And that "it is impertinent to "deny the exiſtence of any phænomenon, merely becauſe we "cannot account for it." But he urges, that "it would be ſilly "to aſſume inſpiration to be true, becauſe God can act myſteri-"ouſly, *i. e.* in ways unknown to us, on his creature man†." Nor was any of the divines, whom he treats on all occaſions with ſo much contempt, ever ſo ſilly, as to aſſume inſpiration to be true, merely becauſe it is poſſible. The actual truth of it muſt be proved by other arguments.

I ſhall therefore take it for granted, that an extraordinary revelation from God to men, for inſtructing and directing them in the knowledge of important truth, of his will and their duty, is poſſible: and that ſuch a revelation might be ſo circumſtanced, as to be of real and ſignal advantage, our author himſelf ſeems ſometimes willing to allow. After having obſerved, that we cannot be obliged to believe againſt reaſon, he adds, that "when "a revelation hath all the authenticity of human teſtimony, "when it appears conſiſtent in all its parts, and when it contains "nothing inconſiſtent with any real knowledge we have of the "ſupreme all-perfect Being, and of natural religion, ſuch a reve-"lation is to be received with the moſt profound reverence, with "the moſt entire ſubmiſſion, and with the moſt unfeigned thankſ-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 414, 415.—See concerning this above, Letter VII.

† Ibid. vol. iii. p. 468.

"giving."

"giving*." This goes upon a ſuppoſition that an extraordinary revelation from God is not only poſſible, but may be of ſignal benefit to mankind; and, if really communicated, ought to be received with great thankfulneſs. And he declares that he does not "preſume to aſſert, that God has made no ſuch particular "revelations of his will to mankind:" though he adds, that "the opinion that there have been ſuch revelations, is not in any "degree ſo agreeable to the notions of infinite knowledge and "wiſdom, as the contrary opinion†."

What he principally bends himſelf to prove is, that mankind had no need of ſupernatural revelation; and that therefore it is no way probable that God would extraordinarily interpoſe to give ſuch diſcoveries of his will. For this purpoſe he mightily extols the abſolute clearneſs and perfection of the law of nature; from whence, he thinks, it follows, "that God has made no other re-"velation of himſelf, and of his will to mankind." Many of the Fragments and Eſſays in his fifth volume are particularly intended to invalidate what Dr. Clarke had urged to ſhew the need the world ſtood in of a divine revelation. See particularly from the twenty-third to the twenty-eighth of his Fragments and Eſſays; as alſo the thirty-third and thirty-fourth. But if we abſtract from the overbearing confidence, and aſſuming air, ſo familiar to Lord Bolingbroke, we ſhall find very little in thoſe eſſays, which is of any conſequence againſt what that very learned writer had advanced.

The reflections that were made in my laſt letter on what his Lordſhip had offered concerning the abſolute clearneſs of the law or religion of nature to all mankind, might ſuffice to ſhew, that there is no juſt foundation for the inference he would draw from it. But it will be proper to enter upon a more particular and diſtinct conſideration of this matter. And to ſet it in a fair light, I ſhall mention ſome things of high importance to mankind, with regard to which they ſtand in great need of particular inſtruction, and of having them cleared and aſcertained by a divine revelation. Such are the articles relating to the unity, the perfection, and providence of God, the worſhip that is to be rendered to him,

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 279.—See alſo vol. v. p. 201.

† Ibid. p. 544.

moral

moral duty taken in its juſt extent, the chief good and happineſs of man, the terms of our acceptance with God, and the means of reconciliation when we have offended him, and the rewards and puniſhments of a future ſtate.

1. The firſt and fundamental principle of all religion relates to the unity, the perfections, and providence of the one true God, the ſupreme original Cauſe of all things, the Maker and Governor of the world. This is juſtly repreſented by our author as the *angular ſtone* of religion. And it comes to us confirmed by ſo many convincing proofs, that one would have been apt to expect that all mankind in all ages ſhould have agreed in acknowledging it: and yet certain it is, that there is ſcarce any thing in which they have fallen into more pernicious errors, than in their notions relating to this great and fundamental article. This writer finds great fault with Mr. Locke for aſſerting, in his *Reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity*, that the heathens were deficient in the firſt article of natural religion, the knowledge of one God, the Maker of all things: and yet this is no more than what Lord Bolingbroke himſelf acknowledges in ſtrong terms. He obſerves, that "though the firſt men could doubt no more, that "ſome cauſe of the world, than that the world itſelf, exiſted, "yet a conſequence of this great event, and of the ſurprize, "ignorance, and inexperience, of mankind muſt have been "much doubt and uncertainty concerning the firſt cauſe*: "That the variety of the phænomena which ſtruck their ſenſe "would lead them to imagine a variety of cauſes.—That accordingly polytheiſm and idolatry prevailed almoſt every-where, "and therefore ſeems more conformable to human ideas abſtracted from the firſt appearance of things, and better proportioned, "by an analogy of human conceptions, to the uncultivated reaſon of mankind, and to underſtandings not ſufficiently informed." He adds, that "polytheiſm, and the conſequence of it, "idolatry, were avowed and taught by legiſlators and philoſophers, and they prevailed more eaſily, becauſe they were more "conformable to the natural conceptions of the human mind, "than the belief of one firſt intelligent Cauſe, the ſole Creator, "Preſerver, and Governor of all things†." And though he in-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 253. † Ibid. p. 259, 260.

 ſinuates,

ſinuates, that "afterwards, when nations became civilized, and "wiſe conſtitutions of government were formed, men could not "be ignorant of this great principle," yet he owns, that "the "vulgar among the Greeks and Romans, and all the learned na- "tions of the caſt, acknowledged a multitude of divinities, to "which they aſcribed every excellence and every defect of their "own nature*." He endeavours indeed to apologize for them, by ſaying, that "the worſhip of this multiplicity of gods did not "interfere with the ſupreme Being in the minds of thoſe that "worſhipped them†." But in plain contradiction to this, he elſewhere ſaith, that ".they loſt ſight of him, and ſuffered ima- "ginary beings to intercept the worſhip due to him alone‡." And ſpeaking of the crowd of imaginary divinities among the heathens, ſuperceleſtial and celeſtial gods, whole gods, and half gods, &c. he ſays, that "they intercepted the worſhip of the "ſupreme Being; and that this monſtrous aſſemblage made the "object of vulgar adoration§." And indeed nothing can be more evident than it is from all the remaining monuments of paganiſm, that the public worſhip preſcribed and eſtabliſhed by their laws was paid to a multiplicity of deities; nor was there any injunction in any of their laws, that the ſupreme God, and he only, was to be adored. The legiſlators, by his own acknowledgment, "thought it dangerous to cure, and uſeful to confirm, "the popular ſuperſtition||."

He is pleaſed indeed to give a magnificent account of the pagan myſteries, as what were intended by the heathen legiſlators for reforming the manners and religion of the people. He aſſerts as poſitively as if he knew it, that "there are good grounds to "be perſuaded, that the whole ſyſtem of polytheiſm was un- "ravelled in the greater myſteries, or that no more of it was "retained than was conſiſtent with monotheiſm, with the belief "of one ſupreme ſelf-exiſtent Being:" and yet he ridicules thoſe who pretend to give a minute and circumſtantial account of thoſe myſteries, as if they had aſſiſted at the celebration of them. "Theſe rites," he ſays, "were kept ſecret, under the ſevereſt "penalties, above two thouſand years: how then can we hope

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 199, 200. † Ibid. vol. v. p. 305.
‡ Ibid. vol. iv. p. 80. § Ibid. p. 461. || Ibid. p. 51.

"to

"to have them revealed to us now*?" He owns however, that "the vulgar gods ſtill kept their places there, and the ab-"ſurdities of polytheiſm were retained, however mitigated: and "that the leſſer myſteries preſerved, and the greater tolerated, "the fictitious divinities which ſuperſtition and poetry had in-"vented, ſuch as Jupiter, Mercury, and Venus, as well as the "rites and ceremonies inſtituted in honour of them, which," he ſays, "were practiſed even by thoſe who were conſummated in "the greater myſteries." And that thus it was particularly in the Eleuſinian myſteries, which were the moſt ſacred of them all†. It gives one no very advantageous notion of the nature and deſign of thoſe myſteries, that Socrates would not be initiated in them. And certain it is, that, notwithſtanding this boaſted expedient, the people, particularly the Athenians, who were remarkably ſtrict in the celebration of thoſe myſteries, ſtill grew more and more addicted to their ſuperſtitions and idolatries, which were never at a greater height than when Chriſtianity appeared.

With regard to the philoſophers, he tells us, "they knew as "well as we know, that there is a firſt intelligent cauſe of all "things, and that the infinite wiſdom and power of this Being "made and preſerves the univerſe, and that his providence go-"verns it‡. But it cannot be denied, that ſome whole ſects of "them did not acknowledge the one ſupreme God, the Maker "and Governor of the world: others of them, as the Sceptics "and Academics, repreſented theſe things as matters of doubtful "diſputation." And as to thoſe of them who acknowledged the exiſtence of the *monad* or unity, he himſelf tells us, that "they neglected to worſhip him, and conformed to the practice "of idolatry, though not to the doctrines of polytheiſm§." And ſuch perſons were certainly very unfit to inſtruct and reform mankind in this important article. And after giving a very lively deſcription of the prevailing polytheiſm and idolatry, he adds, that "thus the vulgar believed, and thus the prieſts en-"couraged, whilſt the philoſophers, overborne by the torrent of "polytheiſm, ſuffered them thus to believe, in ages when true

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 58.
† Ibid. p. 74.
‡ Ibid. vol. v. p. 217.
§ Ibid. vol. iv. p. 48.

" theiſm was reputed atheiſm*." Some of the greateſt philoſophers were of opinion, that God was not to be named, or diſcourſed of among the vulgar, becauſe they were not capable of forming a juſt notion of him. Plato in his book of laws did not preſcribe to the people the worſhip of the one Supreme God, becauſe he looked upon him to be incomprehenſible: and that what he is, or how he is to be worſhipped, is not to be deſcribed or declared. But he appointed twelve ſolemn feſtivals to be obſerved, to the honour of the twelve principal gods, and propoſed the worſhip of the ſtars, whoſe divinity he recommended. See his eighth book of laws, and his *Epinomis*, or appendix to his book of laws.

There was need therefore of an extraordinary divine interpoſition to awaken the attention of mankind to this great and fundamental article of all religion. To divine revelation it was owing, that the belief, and acknowledgment, and adoration of the one true God, and of him only, was eſtabliſhed among the Jews, whilſt the learned and civilized nations all around them were immerſed in the moſt ſtupid idolatry and polytheiſm. And this writer acknowledges, that " our Saviour found the world in " a ſtate of error concerning this firſt principle of natural reli- " gion: and that the ſpreading of Chriſtianity has contributed " to deſtroy polytheiſm and idolatry †."

As the exiſtence and unity of the one true God, ſo his attributes and perfections, and his governing providence, are of high importance to be clearly and certainly known. With regard to the divine attributes and perfections, Lord Bolingbroke obſerves, that " though theiſts will concur in aſcribing all poſſible per- " fections to the ſupreme Being, yet they will always differ when " they deſcend into any detail, and pretend to be particular about " them; as they have always differed in their notions of thoſe " perfections ‡." A revelation from God therefore, in which he declares his own divine attributes and perfections, muſt be of great advantage to mankind: and it is what one ſhould think every true theiſt would wiſh for, that God would be graciouſly pleaſed to make a diſcovery of himſelf, and of his own glorious

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 290. † Ibid. p. 243.
‡ Ibid. vol. v. p. 235.

perfections,

perfections, which may direct and aſſiſt men in forming juſt and worthy notions of them, eſpecially of what it moſt nearly concerneth us to know, his moral attributes.

And as to the knowledge and belief of his governing providence, in this alſo the heathens were greatly deficient. He obſerves, ſpeaking of ſome of the philoſophers who acknowledged the *monad*, or firſt unity, that "they reduced him in ſome ſort "to a non-entity, an abſtract or notional Being, and baniſhed "him almoſt entirely out of the ſyſtem of his works*." Tacitus, having repreſented it as uncertain, whether human affairs were governed by fate and immutable neceſſity, or by chance, obſerves, that the wiſeſt of the ancients were of different ſentiments about it; and that many had this opinion deeply fixed in their minds, that neither our beginning, nor our end, nor men at all, were minded by the Gods.

Mihi hæc ac talia audienti in incerto judicium eſt, fatone res humanæ, et neceſſitate immutabili, an forte volvantur; quippe ſapientiſſimos veterum, quique eorum ſectam æmulantur, diverſos reperies, at multis inſitam opinionem non initia noſtra, non finem, non denique homines diis curæ. Tacit. Annal. lib. 6.

Some, like our author, who pretended to own a general, denied a particular providence, which extends to the individuals of the human race; and, under pretence of high thoughts of the divine majeſty, were for ſecluding him from any concern with human actions or affairs. This then is another matter of great importance, in which an extraordinary revelation from God would be of ſignal uſe. For if he ſhould condeſcend by any well-atteſted revelation to aſſure men of his concern even for the individuals of mankind, to declare his kind and gracious intentions towards them, and his cognizance of their actions, and the events that relate to them, this would greatly contribute to remove their doubts, and would lay the foundation for an ingenuous confidence, an entire reſignation, a cheerful hope, and ſteady dependence.

It appears, from theſe ſhort hints, of how great advantage a

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 466.

well-atteſted revelation from God might be for inſtructing us in the certain knowledge of God, of his attributes, and his providence—things of the higheſt moment in religion, and on which the duty and happineſs of mankind in a great meaſure depend.

2dly, Another thing that it is proper to obſerve here is, that a divine revelation is very needful to teach men not only to know and acknowledge the one true God, his attributes, and providence, but to inſtruct them how to worſhip him in an acceptable manner. Dr. Clarke had urged, that "bare reaſon cannot diſcover in what manner, and with what kind of ſervice "God will be worſhipped." Lord Bolingbroke takes notice of this, and in anſwer to it obſerves, that "bare reaſon cannot diſcover how any external ſervice that man can pay ſhould be "acceptable to the ſupreme and all-perfect Being." He acknowledges, that an inward adoration, a gratitude to God for his benefits, and reſignation to his providence, is neceſſary *; and that the law of nature teaches us "to worſhip God in ſpirit and "in truth, that is, inwardly and ſincerely †." He ſeems to confine the worſhip required in the law of nature to inward worſhip, the devotion of the heart. But if it be neceſſary that men ſhould worſhip the ſupreme Being inwardly, it ſeems highly proper that there ſhould be ſome outward acts of religious homage, openly expreſſive of that inward adoration, reverence and gratitude. Without ſome ſuch external acts of worſhip, men cannot join in ſocial acts of devotion, or in rendering to God public worſhip, without which ſcarce any appearance of religion can be maintained in the world. It is the voice of nature and reaſon, in which all mankind have generally agreed, that there ſhould be external as well as internal worſhip rendered to God, and that there ſhould be ſacred rites appointed for the better regulating and ordering that external worſhip. Accordingly he owns, that "the beſt and wiſeſt of the heathens approved the political in-"ſtitutions of an external ſervice, as far as they helped to keep "up a lively ſenſe of theſe duties in the minds of men, and to "promote the practice of them ‡:" and he had declared before, that "there may be laws and inſtitutions relating to ſuch out-"ward rites and obſervances, which may be proper and even

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 208. † Ibid. p. 98. ‡ Ibid. p. 208.

"neceſſary

"neceſſary means to promote the obſervation of thoſe duties." But he will not allow that "any ſuch laws can be divine ordi-"nances; they can only paſs for human inſtitutions*." But I cannot ſee upon what foundation it can be pretended, that God cannot inſtitute ordinances relating to the external rites of divine worſhip, when it is owned, that ſuch ordinances may be inſtituted by men, and may be uſeful to keep up a lively ſenſe of the great duties of religion in the minds of men, and to promote the obſervance and practice of them. It is undeniably manifeſt, from the experience and obſervation of all ages, that there is nothing in which men have been more apt to err, than in what regards the external rites of religious worſhip; and that, when left merely to human imagination and invention, theſe things have often hindered, inſtead of promoting, the main ends of all religion. This ſhews how needful it was, that God ſhould himſelf inſtitute that external religious ſervice, which is ſo neceſſary, and in which yet mankind have been ſo prone to fall into the errors and extravagances of ſuperſtition. Our author himſelf takes notice of "the numberleſs ridiculous and cruel rites of paganiſm, which "were held neceſſary to obtain the favour, and avert the anger of "heaven†." And ſurely there could not be a more proper and effectual preſervative againſt theſe abſurd ſuperſtitions, than for God to inſtitute the external rites of his own worſhip, and for men to keep cloſe to his inſtitutions. This was certainly one valuable end for which we may ſuppoſe it proper that God ſhould extraordinarily interpoſe to reveal his will to mankind, *viz.* for directing them in the external worſhip he would have rendered to him, that it might be regulated in ſuch a manner, as to be a fit means of promoting inward worſhip, and anſwering the main ends of religion.

3dly, Another thing of great importance to mankind to know, and in which a revelation from God is very needful, and of ſignal uſe, is moral duty taken in its juſt extent. Lord Bolingbroke himſelf repreſents it as taking in our duty towards God and man, according to the different relations in which we ſtand to both‡. To which may be added, the duties and virtues which relate to ſelf-government, and the conducting and regulating our own ap-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 98. † Ibid. p. 208.

‡ Ibid. p. 154. 543. 544.

petites and paſſions. Now the only way we have of being fully inſtructed and directed in the knowledge and practice of our duty, if all regard to extraordinary divine revelation be thrown out of the caſe, is either for every man to collect the whole of his duty for himſelf, merely by the force of his own reaſon and obſervation, or to follow the inſtructions and directions of philoſophers and moraliſts, or the inſtitutions of civil laws.

As to the firſt, there are many paſſages in our author's writings, that repreſent the law of nature in its whole extent, as ſo clear and obvious to the meaneſt underſtanding, that man cannot be miſtaken in it. He frequently talks as if every man was able, without any inſtruction, by conſidering the works of God, and the conſtitution of the human ſyſtem, to furniſh out a ſcheme of natural religion for himſelf, including the main principles and duties of the law of nature. But this pretence is ſo contrary to matter of fact, and to the experience and obſervation of all ages, and has been ſo often expoſed, that I need not take any farther pains, beſides the hints given in my former letter, to ſhew the abſurdity of it, eſpecially as I had occaſion to conſider it at large in the anſwer to Tindal.

The bulk of mankind, therefore, muſt be ſent for the knowledge of their duty, either to the inſtructions of their teachers and wiſe men, or to the inſtitutions of civil laws.

As to the former, if by teachers be meant the heathen prieſts, as diſtinguiſhed from the philoſophers (though our author ſays, that in the earlieſt ages they were the ſame), I believe thoſe of his ſentiments will eaſily allow, that they were not very proper to inſtruct mankind in the right knowledge of religion, and in the true doctrine of morals. But with regard to the philoſophers, though he repreſents them as *venders of falſe wares*, and frequently ſpends whole pages in invectives againſt them, yet when he has a mind to ſhew that there was no need of a divine revelation, he thinks fit to repreſent them as very proper and ſufficient guides and inſtructors to mankind. Dr. Clarke, in his *Evidences of natural and revealed Religion*, had offered ſeveral conſiderations to prove that they were not ſo. Lord Bolingbroke endeavours to take off the force of his obſervations, eſpecially in the twenty-third, twenty-fifth, and twenty-ſixth of his Fragments and Eſſays. And whereas that learned writer had aſ-

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ſerted, that "the heathen philoſophers were never able to prove "clearly and diſtinctly enough to perſons of all capacities the "obligations of virtue, and the will of God in matters of mora-"lity—and that they were not able to frame to themſelves any "complete, and regular, and conſiſtent ſcheme or ſyſtem of "things:" in oppoſition to this, his Lordſhip affirms, that "there is no one moral virtue, which has not been taught, ex-"plained, and proved, by the heathen philoſophers, both occa-"ſionally and purpoſely—That they all agreed, that the practice "of virtue was of neceſſary and indiſpenſable obligation, and that "the happineſs of mankind depended upon it, in general, and in "particular—And that they all agreed alſo what was virtue, and "what was vice*." And he again inſiſteth upon it, that "there "is no one moral precept in the whole goſpel which was not "taught by the philoſophers—And that this is ſtrongly and "largely exemplified by Huetius, in the third book of his *Al-*"*netanæ Quæſtiones.*" And he blames Dr. Clarke for conceal-ing it†.

There are two obſervations which I ſhall make upon what his Lordſhip has here offered.

The firſt is this: That if it were true, that there is no moral precept enjoined in the goſpel, but what may be found in the writings of ſome one or other of the heathen philoſophers, this would not be ſufficient to enforce thoſe duties upon mankind, or to convince them of their obligations to perform them. When ſo many of the philoſophers wrote upon moral ſubjects, it may be ſuppoſed, that one or other of them might, by a happy con-jecture, light upon ſome of the moſt ſublime precepts of the goſ-pel-morality. But what was it to mankind what a particular philoſopher, or even ſect of philoſophers, maintained or taught in their ſchools? They were *not* the public teachers of reli-gion; and was it likely that their refined ſpeculations, uninforced by any authority, and contradicted by others among themſelves, ſhould have any great influence upon mankind, and be regarded by them as divine laws, eſpecially with regard to matters in which the gratification of their appetites and paſſions was concerned, and

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 204, 205. † Ibid. p. 218.

their

their own prevailing inclinations were to be reſtrained or governed? They might, after hearing the reaſonings of the philoſophers, think they were not obliged to govern themſelves by their dictates, however plauſible, and ſeemingly rational. Whereas a divine revelation, clearly aſcertaining and determining their duty in plain and expreſs propoſitions, would carry far ſtronger conviction, and when received and believed would leave no room to doubt of their obligation. And he himſelf ſeems to acknowledge the uſefulneſs of the Chriſtian revelation *to enforce the practice of morality by a ſuperior authority**.

My ſecond reflection is this: That what this writer aſſumes as true is evidently falſe, *viz.* that the philoſophers taught the whole of our duty in the ſame extent as it is taught in the Goſpel. Moral duty, by his own account of it, comprehendeth the duty we owe to God as well as to our fellow-creatures. As to the ſocial and civil duties, on which the peace and order of political ſocieties immediately depend, theſe were generally acknowledged by the ſeveral ſects of philoſophers; though the regard that was paid by the people to theſe duties, was more the effect of civil laws than of the doctrines and dictates of the philoſophers. But as to that part of our duty which relates to God, with what face or conſiſtency can it be pretended, that this was taught by the philoſophers in the ſame extent that it is in the goſpel? Our author makes the adoration of the one true God, and of him only, to be a fundamental obligation of the law of nature, and idolatry to be forbidden in that law. And certain it is, that the moſt celebrated philoſophers, inſtead of inſtructing the people aright in this important part of their duty, fell in themſelves with the common ſuperſtition and idolatry, and directed men to conform in their religious worſhip to the rites and laws of their ſeveral countries; by which polytheiſm was eſtabliſhed, and the public worſhip was directed to a multiplicity of deities.

And as to that part of duty which relateth to the government of the appetites and paſſions, it is evident the philoſophers were far from being agreed what was virtue and what was vice. Some were for giving much greater indulgence than others to the fleſhly

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 294.

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ſenſual appetites and paſſions; and even the unnatural ſin was not only permitted, but recommended, by ſome of them who were of great name.

He affirms, that "of a moral kind there were, properly ſpeaking, no diſputes among philoſophers. They were diſputes "about inſignificant ſpeculations, and no more. For the morality of Zeno, and of Epicurus, reduced to practice, were the "ſame*." As if it were a trifling diſpute, whether the world was formed by a moſt wiſe, benign, and powerful Cauſe and Author, or by a fortuitous jumble of atoms: whether the world and mankind are governed by a moſt wiſe and righteous Providence: or, whether there is no providence of God at all with regard to human affairs. It is evident, that ſubmiſſion to God, dependence upon his providence, gratitude for his benefits, and reſignation to his will, concerning which ſome of the Stoics ſaid excellent things, could make no part of the morality of Epicurus. Thus were the philoſophers divided in the moſt important points of religion, and conſequently in the duties reſulting from it.

But what the philoſophers were not qualified to do was perhaps effected by the legiſlators, and the inſtitutions of civil laws. This is what our author ſeems to lay the principal ſtreſs upon. He obſerves, that "ſome few particular men may diſcover, explain, and preſs upon others the moral obligations that are incumbent upon all, and our moral ſtate will be little improved "by it; but that for this purpoſe governments have been inſtituted, laws have been made, cuſtoms eſtabliſhed, and men "have been deterred from immorality, by various puniſhments "which human juſtice inflicts†:" where he ſuppoſes human governments and laws to be the only effectual means for the ſecurity and improvement of virtue. But it is manifeſt, that, as I had occaſion to obſerve before, the civil laws of any community are very imperfect meaſures of virtue, or moral obligation. A man may obey thoſe laws, and yet be far from being truly virtuous; he may not be obnoxious to the penalties of thoſe laws, and yet be a very vicious and bad man. Some of the moſt worthy and excellent affections and diſpoſitions are unrewarded by thoſe laws; and ſome of the worſt affections un-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 219. † Ibid. p. 480, 481.

puniſhed,

puniſhed. The heart, the proper ſeat of virtue and vice, is not within the cognizance of civil laws, or human governments. And what farther ſhews, that civil laws and cuſtoms are not to be depended upon for direction in matters of morality, is, that it has often happened, that thoſe laws and cuſtoms have been contrary to the rules of real religion and virtue. This writer indeed has taken upon him to aſſert, that "whatever violations "of the law of nature may have been committed by particular "men, yet none that were deemed to be ſuch, and perhaps few "that might be called ſtrictly ſuch, have been enacted into laws, "or have grown up into eſtabliſhed cuſtoms*." And that "the "tables of the natural law, which are hung up in the works of "God, are obvious to the ſight of all men; and therefore no "political ſociety ever formed a ſyſtem of laws in direct and "avowed contradiction to them†." But though no legiſlators ever declared in plain terms, that the laws they enacted were contrary to the law of nature, which it were abſurd to ſuppoſe, yet that many laws have been enacted which were really contrary to that law, is both undeniably evident from many well-known inſtances of ſuch laws, and is what he himſelf is obliged to acknowledge. He obſerves, that "the law of nature has been "blended with many abſurd and contradictory laws in all ages "and countries, as well as with cuſtoms, which, if they aroſe "independent on laws, have obtained the force of laws‡:" And that "errors about the law of nature, and contradictions to "it, abound, and have always abounded, in the laws and cuſtoms "of ſociety§."

Laying all theſe things together, it is manifeſt, that men ſtood in great need of a divine revelation, to give them a clear and certain direction concerning moral duty taken in its juſt extent. The laws of nature, according to our author, are general, and men have been always very prone to make wrong deductions from them: and therefore if God ſhould be pleaſed, in a way of extraordinary revelation, to give a ſyſtem of laws to mankind, plainly pointing out the particulars of their duty, and determining it by his own divine authority, whereby even the vulgar part

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 151. † Ibid. p. 153. ‡ Ibid. p. 100.
§ Ibid. p. 153.—See alſo ibid. p. 197. 201.

of

of mankind might be certainly aſſured of their duty in the moſt important inſtances, and what it is that God required of them; this would both give them the beſt direction, and would, where really believed and received, have an influence in binding their moral obligations upon them, which could not be expected, either from the dictates of philoſophers, or the force of human laws. And accordingly, ſome of the wiſeſt lawgivers of antiquity, in order to give their laws greater authority on the minds of men, endeavoured to make them paſs upon the people for divine. And this writer himſelf declares, that "nothing may "ſeem in ſpeculation ſo proper to enforce moral obligation, as a "true revelation, or a revelation believed to be true*." Mr. Locke, in his *Reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity*, hath fully conſidered this matter; where he hath ſhewn the inſufficiency of human reaſon, unaſſiſted by revelation, in its great and proper buſineſs of morality. His Lordſhip has taken ſome notice of this. But the account he is pleaſed to give of Mr. Locke's argument is ſo poor and trifling, that though it be as fine a piece of reaſoning as can be met with on this ſubject, it is hard to know it in his repreſentation of it. This any man will be convinced of, that compares it as it ſtands in Mr. Locke's works, vol. ii. p. 573, *et ſeq.* edit. fol. 1740, with what Lord Bolingbroke hath offered upon it, vol. iv. p. 295, 296.

4thly, It is a point of great importance to mankind to be inſtructed to form right notions of happineſs, or wherein their chief good, and the proper felicity of the human nature, doth conſiſt. His Lordſhip hath taken notice of what Dr. Clarke had obſerved, that, according to Varro, "there were no leſs than two hundred "and fourſcore different opinions about what was the chief good "or final happineſs of man." He ſays, "that there were ſo "many may be doubted; but that they muſt have been extreme-"ly various, is certain. The *ſummum bonum*, or ſupreme "good of man, as it was underſtood and taught by the heathen "philoſophers, was a ſubject wherein every man had a right "to pronounce for himſelf, and no man had a right to pro-"nounce for another. Theſe diſputes were therefore very "trifling†." But certainly if there be an inquiry of the utmoſt importance to mankind, it is that about the chief good. For to be

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 268. † Ibid. p. 206.

wrong

wrong in this will lead a man wrong in his whole courſe; ſince his chief good muſt be his principal governing end. His Lordſhip is for leaving every man to judge of this for himſelf, and that no man has a right to judge for another. And ſince he makes happineſs to be what every man muſt purſue by the law and dictates of nature, and that the morality of actions, and the proper ground of their obligation, "conſiſt in this, that they are "the means of acquiring happineſs agreeable to our nature;*" if men fix a wrong happineſs to themſelves, it will put them upon improper meaſures, and give a wrong direction to their moral conduct. And certain it is, that there is nothing in which men are more apt to be miſtaken, and to form wrong judgments, than this. This author makes a diſtinction between pleaſure and happineſs, and obſerves, that inſtinct and appetite lead to the former, and reaſon to the latter. But he owns, that moſt men are apt to confound theſe: and he himſelf defines happineſs to be a *continued permanent ſeries of agreeable ſenſations or pleaſures* †. And muſt every man be left to himſelf, without any farther direction, to judge of his duty and happineſs, from what he thinks will produce in him a ſeries of the moſt agreeable ſenſations and pleaſures; and that, abſtracting (for ſo our author would have it) from all conſideration of another life, and a future account? 'If the paſſions be brought into the conſultation (and they will be apt to force themſelves in, and claim being heard), the judgment that is formed is like to be very unequal and uncertain; eſpecially conſidering the influence they have, by his own account, in bringing over reaſon to pronounce on their ſide, or at leaſt to come to a kind of compoſition with them. It muſt needs therefore be a mighty advantage to have this determined for us by a divine authority; and nothing could be more worthy of the divine wiſdom and goodneſs, than to grant an extraordinary revelation for inſtructing men in what relates to the true happineſs and perfection of their nature, and directing them in the way that leads to it.

5thly, Another thing which it highly concerneth men to be well informed of, relateth to the terms of their acceptance with God, and the means of reconciliation when they have offended

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 283, 284. † Ibid. p. 378.

him;

him; and this is a very proper ſubject for a divine revelation. Dr. Clarke had urged this, in his *Evidences of natural and revealed Religion**. But his Lordſhip, who had undertaken to anſwer him, thinks this to be of ſmall conſequence, and ſcarce worth enquiring about. He pronounces, that "neither reaſon "nor experience will lead us to inquire, what propitiation God "will accept, nor in what manner a reconciliation between the "Supreme Being, and this worm man, is to be made†." Indeed upon his ſcheme it would be to little purpoſe to make ſuch an inquiry, ſince he would have us believe that God doth not concern himſelf at all about the individuals of the human race, nor taketh any notice of their actions, ſo as to be pleaſed or diſpleaſed with them, or to reward or puniſh them on the account of thoſe actions. I ſhall not repeat what hath been already offered to ſhew that this ſcheme is contrary to reaſon, and, if purſued to its genuine conſequences, would be ſubverſive of all virtue and good order in the world. At preſent I ſhall only farther obſerve, that if men are reaſonable creatures, moral agents, and if God hath given them a law, as this writer ſometimes not only allows, but aſſerts, and which muſt be acknowledged, if the law of nature be God's law; then they muſt certainly be under indiſpenſable obligations to obey that law; nor can it conſiſtently be ſuppoſed, that the great Governor of the world is perfectly indifferent, whether his reaſonable creatures obey his law or not. A tranſgreſſion of that law, which is the will of God, muſt certainly have a monſtrous malignity in it, as it is an offence committed by his reaſonable creatures, and the ſubjects of his moral government, againſt the majeſty and authority, as well as goodneſs, of the ſupreme univerſal Lord and Sovereign of the univerſe. And how can ſuch creatures as we are pretend poſitively to pronounce what puniſhment ſin deſerves, or how far it may ſeem fit to God in his governing wiſdom and righteouſneſs to puniſh his offending creatures, or upon what terms he will pardon their tranſgreſſions, and reſtore them to his grace and favour, or how far that pardon is to extend? Theſe are things which manifeſtly depend upon what ſeemeth moſt fit to his infi-

* Clarke's Evidences of natural and revealed Religion, p. 293.

† Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 209.

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nite wiſdom, and concerning which we could not preſume to form a certain judgment, if he ſhould not declare his will concerning it.

As to what our author adds, that "repentance, as it implies "amendment, is one of the doctrines of natural religion; and "he does not ſo much as ſuſpect, that any farther revelation is "neceſſary to eſtabliſh it;" it will be eaſily owned, that repentance and amendment are neceſſary when we have ſinned againſt God; and that this is a doctrine of natural religion: but that this alone is ſufficient to avert the penalty we had incurred by diſobedience, natural reaſon cannot aſſure us. It is certain, that to eſtabliſh this rule in human governments would go a great way to diſſolve all order and government. And who can undertake to affirm, that in the divine government it muſt be an eſtabliſhed rule, that as often as ever ſinners repent, they muſt not only be freed from the puniſhment they had incurred, but be received to the divine favour, and their imperfect obedience rewarded, as if they had not offended, without any farther expedient to ſecure and vindicate the authority of his laws? It is evident, that in the natural courſe of things, as ordered by divine providence, repentance and amendment do not avert many of thoſe evils which may be regarded as the puniſhments of men's crimes. They often labour under evils brought upon them by thoſe vices of which they have heartily repented, and feel the penal effects of their evil courſes, even after they have forſaken them. And ſince by this conſtitution the Author of nature hath declared, that repentance alone ſhall not free men in all caſes from puniſhment, who can take upon him to determine, that our great offended ſovereign, the moſt wiſe and righteous Lord and Governor of the world, may not judge ſomething farther neceſſary to ſhew his diſpleaſure againſt ſin, and to vindicate the majeſty of his government, and the authority of his laws? And accordingly the natural ſenſe of mankind hath generally led them to be anxiouſly ſolicitous, when they were ſenſible of their having offended God, to uſe ſome means to avert the divine diſpleaſure. Their fears have given occaſion to much ſuperſtition, and many expedients have been deviſed, which have been generally of ſuch a kind, as to ſhew how improper judges men are of thoſe things, if left to themſelves. A divine revelation would undoubtedly give the

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beſt and ſureſt direction in matters of this nature, and the fulleſt ſatisfaction to the mind. It properly belongeth to God to determine upon what terms he will be propitiated to guilty creatures, how far his forgiveneſs ſhall extend, and what graces and favours he ſhall think fit to confer upon them.

The laſt thing I ſhall mention, as what ſhews the great need of divine revelation, relates to the rewards and puniſhments of a future ſtate. That this is a doctrine of vaſt importance to mankind, for engaging them to virtue, and reſtraining their vices, appears from this writer's own expreſs acknowledgments. Several paſſages were produced to this purpoſe in my ninth letter. At the ſame time he hath endeavoured to ſhew, that we have no aſſurance of it by human reaſon, but that it rather leadeth us to believe the contrary. And yet he does not pretend abſolutely to affirm, that it is evident to reaſon there is no ſuch ſtate at all. Since therefore it is of great importance to mankind to believe a ſtate of future retributions, and yet we have not ſufficient aſſurance of it by human unaſſiſted reaſon, it muſt certainly be a proper ſubject of divine revelation. Some of the deiſts indeed have in this caſe thought proper to take a different method. In order to avoid the argument brought from hence to ſhew the neceſſity or the advantage of an extraordinary revelation, they have pretended, that the doctrine of the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate, is ſo evident to the natural reaſon of mankind, and hath been ſo generally believed in all ages and nations, that there was no need of a revelation to aſſure men of it. But Lord Bolingbroke hath precluded himſelf from this way of arguing, ſince he hath taken pains to prove, that this doctrine is not founded in reaſon. And though he ſometimes declares it to have been urged and recommended by the wiſeſt men among the ancients, he repreſents it as if it were what they regarded rather as an uſeful doctrine than a true one, and as if they did not really believe it themſelves, though they thought it neceſſary that the people ſhould believe it. He affirms, that "the greateſt part "of the philoſophers did their utmoſt to eſtabliſh the belief of "rewards and puniſhments in a future life, that they might al-"lure to virtue, and deter from vice, more effectually*." Yet

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 222.

afterwards he tells us, that "the moſt zealous aſſerters of a ſupreme "Being, and warmeſt defenders of his providence, and they who "were the moſt perſuaded of the neceſſity of religion to preſerve "government, either rejected the doctrine of a future ſtate, or "they admitted it by halves, *i. e.* they did not admit future puniſhments:" and that "this doctrine was never firmly enough "eſtabliſhed in the philoſophical, whatever it was in the vulgar "creed." Yea he aſſerts, that "it was not only problematical "in the opinions of theiſtical philoſophers, but it ſeems in ſeveral inſtances to have had little hold on vulgar opinion:" as he endeavours to ſhew, by a remarkable quotation from Cicero, *Orat. pro A. Cluentio;* which he ſeems well pleaſed with, and refers to more than once*.

The truth is, it would be equally wrong to affirm, that all the philoſophers believed it, and that none of them did ſo. It is wrong on the one hand to pretend, as Lord Bolingbroke has done, that there is no foundation for it in reaſon; or on the other, that it is ſo clear and demonſtrable from human reaſon, that there was no need of a divine revelation farther to confirm and enforce it. The arguments for a future ſtate in general, eſpecially thoſe of a moral kind, are of great weight: but yet there are ſeveral things to be oppoſed to them, which diminiſh the evidence, and will miniſter ground of ſuſpicion and doubt, if conſidered merely on the foot of natural reaſon. And as to the nature, greatneſs, and duration, of thoſe future rewards and puniſhments, it is evident that unaſſiſted reaſon can give us no information concerning it which can be depended upon. We ſtand in great need, therefore, of an extraordinary revelation to aſſure us of that inviſible ſtate. This plainly follows from what his Lordſhip hath advanced. He repreſents "the rewards and puniſhments of a future ſtate as the great bands that attach men to revealed religion:" and introduces his plain man as ſaying, that "it would "be for the intereſt of theſe, and ſeveral other doctrines, to let "them reſt on the authority of revelation†." And he directly declares, "that this doctrine muſt ſtand on the bottom of revelation, or on none. On this bottom it would do ſome good "moſt certainly, and it could do no hurt‡."

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 354, 355. 487.

† Ibid. vol. iii. p. 557.—See alſo vol. v. p. 342. 353. ‡ Ibid. p. 488.

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The ſeveral conſiderations which have been offered may ſuffice to ſhew the need the world ſtood in of an extraordinary revelation: and that therefore it may be reaſonably concluded from the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, that mankind have not been univerſally, and at all times, left without the aſſiſtance of ſuch a revelation. It is particularly probable, from the circumſtances of men in the firſt ages of the world, that they were not left altogether deſtitute of means that ſeemed ſo neceſſary to furniſh them with a right knowledge of God, and of their duty. This writer himſelf obſerves, in a paſſage cited above, that "a conſequence of the ſurprize, inexperience, and ignorance, of the "firſt men, muſt have been much doubt and uncertainty concerning the firſt Cauſe." And that "to prove the unity of "the firſt Cauſe required more obſervation, and deeper reflection, than the firſt men could make*." And after having obſerved, that "the precepts of the law of nature are general, and "that reaſon muſt be employed to make proper and neceſſary "deductions from thoſe precepts, and to apply them in every "caſe that concerns our duty to God and man," he adds, that "human reaſon being at beſt fallible, and having been little informed by experience in the early ages, a multitude of falſe "deductions, and wrong applications, could not fail to be "made†." It is therefore highly probable, from the goodneſs of God, and the neceſſities of mankind, that he would graciouſly interpoſe to make ſome diſcoveries of himſelf, and of his will, in the earlieſt ages, to the firſt parents and anceſtors of the human race, to be by them communicated to their offſpring, for inſtructing them in the main important principles of all religion, and directing them in the principal articles of moral duty. And as this may be plainly gathered from the accounts given us in Scripture, ſo there are ſeveral facts in the hiſtory of mankind that almoſt neceſſarily lead us to ſuch a ſuppoſition. To this may principally be aſcribed the general belief of ſome of the main principles of religion, which obtained before men had made any conſiderable improvements in philoſophy, or the art of reaſoning; particularly relating to the creation of the world, the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate, which were generally received

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 259. † Ibid. vol. v. p. 154.

even among the moſt illiterate and barbarous nations, and were probably derived from a tradition tranſmitted from the firſt ages, and originally owing to divine revelation. And accordingly it has been almoſt univerſally believed among mankind, that divine revelations have been communicated; which belief may be probably aſcribed to traditional accounts of ſuch revelations, as well as to the natural ſenſe men have generally had of their need of ſuch aſſiſtances. There has been no ſuch thing as mere natural religion, abſtracting from all divine revelation, profeſſed in any age, or in any nation of the world. Lord Bolingbroke, in his inquiries this way, is forced to have recourſe to China, and to the fabulous ages of their hiſtory, anſwering pretty much to the golden age of the poets, when he ſuppoſes they were governed by mere natural religion*. But of this he produceth no proofs. And if the ages there referred to relate, as they probably do, to the early patriarchal times, the original revelation might have been preſerved in ſome degree of purity, though in proceſs of time it became greatly corrupted there, as well as in other nations.

It adds a great weight to all that has been obſerved, that the greateſt men of antiquity ſeem to have been ſenſible, that bare reaſon alone was not ſufficient to enforce doctrines and laws with a proper force upon mankind, without a divine authority and revelation. Our author obſerves, that "the moſt celebrated philoſophers and law-givers did enforce their doctrines and laws "by a divine authority, and call in an higher principle to the aſ-"ſiſtance of philoſophy than bare reaſon." He inſtances in "Zoroaſter, Hoſtanes, the Magi, Minos, Pythagoras, Numa, &c. and "all thoſe who founded or formed religions and commonwealths; "who made theſe pretenſions, and paſſed for perſons divinely "inſpired

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 228, 229. His Lordſhip expreſſes himſelf on this head with a caution and modeſty not uſual with him. He ſaith, that "among the countries with which we are better acquainted, he can "find none where natural religion was eſtabliſhed in its full extent and purity, as it *ſeems* to have been once in China." It may be obſerved by the way, that having highly extolled the ancient Chineſe ſages, he takes notice of the conciſe manner in which they expreſſed themſelves, whenever they ſpoke of the Supreme Being. And that "their refining ſucceſſors have endeavoured, "in part at leaſt, to found their atheiſm upon what thoſe ſages had advanced." Vol. v. p. 228. I think, according to this account, there muſt have

"inſpired and commiſſioned *." This ſhews that they built upon a principle deeply laid in the human nature, concerning the need we ſtand in of a divine authority and revelation, and which was probably ſtrengthened by ſome remains of ancient traditions relating to ſuch revelations. But as thoſe philoſophers and lawgivers he ſpeaks of produced no proper and authentic credentials, it could not be expected to have a very laſting and extenſive effect; and yet the very pretences to it gave their laws and inſtitutions a force, which otherwiſe they would not have had. But as the ſeveral ſects of philoſophers in ſubſequent ages among the Greeks and Romans only ſtood on the foot of their own reaſonings, and could not pretend to a divine authority, this very much hindered the effect of their inſtructions. And indeed the beſt and wiſeſt among them confeſſed their ſenſe of the want of a divine revelation, and hoped for ſomething of that nature. This is what Dr. Clarke has ſhewn by expreſs teſtimonies: nor does Lord Bolingbroke deny it. He ſays, "it muſt be admitted "that Plato inſinuates in many places the want, or the neceſſity "of a divine revelation, to diſcover the external ſervice God re"quires, and the expiation for ſin, and to give ſtronger aſſur"ances of the rewards and puniſhments that await men in ano"ther world †." But he thinks it abſurd and trifling to bring the opinion of Socrates, Plato, and other philoſophers, concerning their want of "divine revelation, and their hopes that it "would be ſupplied, as a proof that the want was real, and that, "after it had been long complained of, it was ſupplied ‡." He attempts to ſhew that their want was not real, as if he knew better what they wanted than they themſelves did, and were a more proper judge of the true ſtate of their caſe than they were. He

have been a great obſcurity in their manner of expreſſing themſelves concerning the Divinity, and that they were greatly deficient in the inſtructions they gave with regard to this great fundamental article of all religion. How vaſtly ſuperior in this reſpect was Moſes to all thoſe admired ſages, in whoſe writings, and in every part of the holy ſcriptures, the exiſtence, the perfections, and providence of God, are aſſerted and deſcribed in ſo plain and ſtrong a manner, as is fitted to lead people of common capacities to the firm belief, obedience, and adoration of the Supreme Being, the great Creator and Governor of the world!

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 227. † Ibid. p. 214, 215.

‡ Ibid. p. 216.

repeats what he had ſaid before, that there is no moral precept taught in the goſpel which they did not teach: and that "the "phænomena that diſcovered to them the exiſtence of God, diſ- "covered the divine will in all the extent of moral obliga- "tion*:" as if it were equally eaſy to diſcover the *whole extent of moral obligation*, as to diſcover the exiſtence of the Deity. He adds, that "they could not know a revealed reli- "gion, nor any real want of it, before the revelation was made." That they could not be acquainted with the revelation before it was given, will be readily granted; but it doth not follow, that they could not be ſenſible of their want of it. He pronounces however, that "their complaints, and their expectations, were "founded in proud curioſity, and vain preſumption." It was pride, it ſeems, to be ſenſible of their ignorance, and need of farther inſtruction; it was preſumption to hope or to deſire any farther illumination in things concerning which they were in doubt, and which it was of great importance to them to know. He adds, that "the knowledge they had was ſuch as the Author "of nature had thought ſufficient, ſince he had given them no "more;" and concludes, that "for Dr. Clarke to deduce from "the ſuppoſed reaſonableneſs of their complaints, the neceſſity "of a farther revelation, is to weigh his own opinion and theirs "againſt providence†." But allowing the neceſſity of revela- tion, there is no juſt pretence for arraigning the conduct of di- vine providence: for however needful a revelation is ſuppoſed to be for giving men full aſſurance and information concerning things of high importance, yet thoſe to whom that revelation never was made known, ſhall not be accountable for what they never had an opportunity of knowing. Beſides, our author goes upon the ſuppoſition, that the world had been left all along without the aſſiſtance of divine revelation, and that the heathens had never had an opportunity of knowing more of religion than they actually did know. But this is a wrong ſuppoſition. God had been pleaſed to make revelations and diſcoveries of himſelf, and of his will, from the beginning; which, if they had been duly improved, and carefully tranſmitted, as the importance of them deſerved, would have been of vaſt advantage. Great re-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 217. † Ibid. p. 220.

mains.

mains of this original religion continued for a long time among the nations: and theſe traditions, together with their own reaſon, duly improved, might have preſerved the main principles of religion and morals among them. And if, through the negligence and corruption of mankind, this true primitive religion was in a great meaſure loſt and confounded in polytheiſm and idolatry, no blame could be caſt upon divine providence: nor could the wiſdom and righteouſneſs of God have been juſtly arraigned, though no more had ever been done for the human race. But ſuppoſing, which was really the caſe, that God was graciouſly pleaſed, at that time, and in that manner which ſeemed fitteſt to his infinite wiſdom, to communicate a clearer and fuller diſcovery and revelation of his will than had been ever yet given to mankind, for recovering them from the ignorance, idolatry, and corruption, into which they were generally fallen, this certainly ought to be acknowledged with great thankfulneſs, as a moſt ſignal inſtance of the divine goodneſs and love to mankind, and concern for human happineſs.

There is one paſſage more which may deſerve ſome notice. Having obſerved, that biſhop Wilkins ſeems to place the chief diſtinction of human nature not in reaſon in general, but in religion, the apprehenſion of a Deity, and the expectation of a future ſtate, which no creature below man doth partake of; he remarks upon it, that "they who ſuppoſe all men incapable to "attain a full knowledge of natural religion and theology with-"out revelation, take from us the very eſſence and form of man, "according to the biſhop, and deny that any of us have that "degree of reaſon which is neceſſary to diſtinguiſh our ſpecies, "and ſufficient to lead us to the unity of the firſt intelligent "Cauſe of all things*." But the biſhop, by repreſenting man to be a religious creature, only intended to ſignify, that he is naturally capable of knowing, and being inſtructed in it, which the brutes are not: but it is not to be underſtood, as if all men had naturally an actual knowledge of religion, which is contrary to fact and experience: or as if all men were capable of attaining to a full knowledge of it merely by the force of their own reaſon, without any inſtruction or aſſiſtance at all. Man's being

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 71.

formed a religious creature does not hinder the uſe and neceſſity of inſtruction. It is ſtill ſuppoſed, that all proper helps and aſſiſtances are to be taken in. And notwithſtanding his natural capacities, he would never attain to ſuch a knowledge of religion without the aſſiſtance of divine revelation, as he may attain to by that aſſiſtance. Theſe things are perfectly conſiſtent: man's being in his original deſign a religious creature, and his ſtanding in need of divine revelation to inſtruct him in religion, and give him a fuller knowledge of it. Revelation ſuppoſes him a creature capable of religion, and applies to him as ſuch.

It may not be improper to obſerve here, that this writer, who leaves no method unattempted which he thinks may anſwer his deſign, ſeems ſometimes to cry up the great efficacy of a true divine revelation, and the mighty effects it muſt have produced, if it had actually been made, with a view to ſhew that never was there any revelation really given to mankind. He ſays, that "unexceptionable revelations, real miracles, and certain "traditions, could never prove ineffectual*:" That "if the "revelations that have been pretended, had not been pretended "only; if the ſame divine wiſdom that ſhews both the exiſtence "and will of God in his works, had preſcribed any particular "form of worſhip to mankind, and had inſpired the particular "application of his general laws, the neceſſary conſequence "would have been, that the ſyſtem of religion and government "would have been uniform through the whole world, as well "as conformable to nature and reaſon, and the ſtate of mankind "would have arrived at human perfection†." He proceeds ſo far as to declare, that in a ſupernatural diſpenſation, the *divine omnipotence* ſhould have *impoſed it on all mankind*, ſo as neceſſarily to *engage their aſſent*‡: And that it *muſt have forced conviction*, and *taken away even the poſſibility of doubt*§. Can any thing be more unreaſonable? As if revelation could be of no uſe at all, except by an irreſiſtible force it overpowered all men's underſtandings and wills. But ſurely, if God gives men clear diſcoveries of his will and their duty, this muſt be acknowledged to be a glorious inſtance of his wiſdom and goodneſs, though he

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 224.
† Ibid. vol. v. p. 201.
‡ Ibid. vol. iv. p. 267.
§ Ibid. p. 210.

does

does not abſolutely conſtrain them to aſſent, which would be to take away their free agency, and to deſtroy the œconomy of his providence. May we not here apply in the caſe of revelation what he himſelf ſaith with regard to reaſon? "It may be truly "ſaid, that God, when he gave us reaſon, left us to our free-will, "to make a proper or improper uſe of it; ſo that we are obliged "to our Creator, for a certain rule, and ſufficient means of ar- "riving at happineſs, and have none to blame but ourſelves when "we fail of it. It is not reaſon, but perverſe will, that makes "men fall ſhort of attainable happineſs. And we are ſelf-con- "demned when we deviate from the rule*." This holds ſtrongly with regard to revelation. God hath been graciouſly pleaſed to reveal doctrines and laws to mankind, of great uſe and advantage for inſtructing them in the knowledge of religion, and directing them in the way to happineſs. But when he has done this, and confirmed that revelation with ſufficient credentials, ſtill he thinks fit, as the wiſe moral Governor, to leave them to their free-will, and the exerciſe of their own moral powers; and thus deals with them as reaſonable creatures, and moral agents. If they do not receive, and make a right uſe of this advantage, the divine wiſdom and goodneſs is not to be blamed, but their own obſtinacy and perverſeneſs.

But though a revelation, if really given, cannot be ſuppoſed to come with ſuch force as irreſiſtibly to conſtrain men's aſſent, and though it fail of producing all thoſe effects which might be juſtly expected, and which it is naturally fitted to produce, yet it may be of very great uſe and benefit to mankind. This writer repreſents the general reformation of men as an impoſſible thing: He obſerves, that neither human nor divine laws have been able to reform the manners of men effectually: yet he owns, that "this is ſo far from making natural or revealed religion, or any "means that tend to the reformation of mankind, unneceſſary, "that it makes them all more neceſſary.—And that nothing "ſhould be neglected that tends to enforce moral obligation, and "all the doctrines of natural religion. And that nothing may "ſeem in ſpeculation ſo proper to this purpoſe, as a true revela-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 288.

"tion,

"tion, or a revelation believed to be true*." And he afterwards ſays, that "if the conflict between virtue and vice in the "great commonwealth of mankind was not maintained by re-"ligious and civil inſtitutions, the human ſtate would be in-"tolerable†." Thoſe therefore muſt be very ill employed, and can in no ſenſe be regarded as the friends and benefactors of mankind, who take pains to deſtroy theſe inſtitutions, to ſubvert the main principles of natural and revealed religion, and thereby to deſtroy all the influence it might have on the minds of men. If the reformation of mankind be ſo difficult, notwithſtanding all the powers of reaſon, and all the force of the additional light, and powerful motives, which revelation furniſhes, what could be expected, if all theſe were laid aſide, and men were taught to have no regard to them at all?

I ſhall conclude with obſerving, that Lord Bolingbroke's ſcheme, contrary to his own intention, ſeems to furniſh arguments to prove the great uſefulneſs and neceſſity of divine revelation. He has endeavoured to ſhew, that we can have no certainty, if we judge by the phenomena, concerning the moral attributes of God, his juſtice and goodneſs: That no argument can be brought from reaſon in proof of a particular providence, though he does not pretend to ſay it is impoſſible: That the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate, though uſeful to be believed, are things which we have no ground from reaſon to believe, and which reaſon will neither affirm nor deny: That the laws of nature are general, and the particulars of moral duty derived from them are very uncertain, and in which men have been always very apt to miſtake, and make wrong concluſions. Now if it be of high importance, as it manifeſtly is, that men ſhould be aſſured of the moral attributes of God; that they ſhould believe a particular providence, extending to the individuals of the human race, and exerciſing an inſpection over them, and their actions and affairs; that they ſhould believe the immortality of the ſoul, and a ſtate of future rewards and puniſhments; and that they ſhould be rightly inſtructed in the particulars of moral duty; if all theſe be of unqueſtionable importance

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 267, 268. † Ibid. p. 227.

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to be believed and known by mankind (and yet we can, according to him, have no aſſurance of them by mere natural reaſon), then there is great need of an extraordinary divine revelation to give us a proper certainty in theſe matters; and a well-atteſted revelation aſſuring us of theſe things, and furniſhing us with proper inſtructions concerning them, ought to be received with the higheſt thankfulneſs.

LETTER XXVIII.

Lord Bolingbroke's ſtrange Repreſentation of the Jewiſh Revelation—His Attempts againſt the Truth of the Moſaic Hiſtory—The Antiquity, Impartiality, and great Uſefulneſs of that Hiſtory ſhewn—The Pretence, that Moſes was not a contemporary Author, and that his Hiſtory is not confirmed by collateral Teſtimony, and that there is no Proof that the Pentateuch was written by Moſes, examined—The Moſaic Hiſtory and Laws not forged in the Time of the Judges, nor in that of the Kings, nor after the Babyloniſh Captivity—The Charge of Inconſiſtencies in the Moſaic Accounts conſidered—The grand Objection againſt the Moſaic Hiſtory, drawn from the incredible Nature of the Facts themſelves, examined at large—The Reaſon and Propriety of erecting the Moſaic Polity—No Abſurdity in ſuppoſing God to have ſelected the Jews as a peculiar People—The great and amazing Difference between them and the heathen Nations, as to the Acknowledgment and Adoration of the one true God, and him only—The good Effects of the Jewiſh Conſtitution, and the valuable Ends which were anſwered by it—It is no juſt Objection againſt the Truth of the Scriptures, that they come to us through the Hands of the Jews.

SIR,

HAVING conſidered what Lord Bolingbroke hath offered with regard to divine revelation in general, I now proceed to examine the objections he has advanced againſt the Jewiſh and Chriſtian revelation. Of the latter he ſometimes ſpeaks with ſeeming reſpect and decency: but with regard to the former, he ſets no bounds to invective and abuſe. He here allows himſelf without reſerve in all the licentiouſneſs of reproach. Far from admitting it to be a true divine revelation, he every-where repreſents it as the very worſt conſtitution that ever pretended to a divine original, and as even worſe than atheiſm.

Beſides occaſional paſſages every-where interſperſed in his writings, there are ſome parts of his works, where he ſets himſelf purpoſely

purpoſely and at large to expoſe the Moſaic revelation. This is the principal deſign of the long letter in the third volume of his works, occaſioned by one of Archbiſhop Tillotſon's ſermons: as alſo of the ſecond ſection of his third eſſay in the fourth volume, which is *on the Riſe and Progreſs of Monotheiſm;* and of the fifteenth, twentieth, twenty-firſt, ſeventy-third, ſeventy-fifth, of his Fragments and Eſſays in the fifth volume.

In conſidering Lord Bolingbroke's objections againſt the holy ſcriptures of the Old Teſtament, and eſpecially againſt the books of Moſes, I ſhall diſtinctly examine what he hath offered againſt the truth of the ſcripture hiſtory, and againſt the divine authority of the ſacred writings. This is the method he himſelf hath pointed out in the above-mentioned letter, occaſioned by one of Archbiſhop Tillotſon's ſermons.

I ſhall begin with conſidering his objections againſt the truth of the hiſtory. But firſt it will not be improper to make ſome general obſervations upon the ſcripture hiſtory, and eſpecially that which is contained in the Moſaic writings.

And firſt, it deſerves our veneration and regard on the account of its great antiquity. We have no accounts that can in any degree be depended upon, or that have any pretence to be received as authentic records, prior to the Moſaic hiſtory, or indeed till ſome ages after it was written. But though it relateth to the moſt ancient times, it is obſervable that it doth not run up the hiſtory to a fabulous and incredible antiquity, as the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and ſome other nations did. Moſes's account of the time of the creation of the world, the general deluge, &c. reduces the age of the world within the rules of a moderate computation, perfectly conſiſtent with the beſt accounts we have of the origin of nations, the founding of cities and empires, the novelty of arts and ſciences, and of the moſt uſeful inventions of human life: all which leads us to aſſign an age to the world which comports very well with the Moſaic hiſtory, but is no way compatible with the extravagant antiquities of other eaſtern nations.

Another thing which ſhould greatly recommend the ſcripture hiſtory to our own eſteem, is the remarkable ſimplicity and impartiality of it. It contains a plain narration of facts, delivered in a ſimple unaffected ſtyle, without art or ornament. And never

ver was there any hiſtory that diſcovered a more equal and unbiaſſed regard to truth. Several things are there recorded, which, if the hiſtorian had not laid it down as a rule to himſelf, not only not to contradict the truth, but not to conceal or diſguiſe it, would not have been mentioned. Of this kind is what our author refers to concerning Jacob's obtaining the birth-right and bleſſing by a fraud*. For though it is plain, from the prophecy that was given forth before the birth of the children, that the bleſſing was originally deſigned for Jacob the younger in preference to Eſau the elder, yet the method Jacob took, by the advice of his mother Rebekka, to engage his father Iſaac to pronounce the bleſſing upon him, had an appearance of art and circumvention, which, conſidering the known jealouſy and antipathy between the Edomites and the people of Iſrael, and the occaſion it might give to the former to inſult and reproach the latter, it might be expected an Iſraelitiſh hiſtorian would have endeavoured to conceal. To the ſame impartial regard to truth it is owing, that Reuben's inceſt, and that of Judah with his daughter-in-law Tamar, from which deſcended the principal families of the noble tribe of Judah, are recorded: as is alſo the cruel and perfidious act of Simeon and Levi, the latter Moſes's own anceſtor, and the curſe pronounced upon them by Jacob on the account of it. This writer indeed, who ſeems determined at all hazards, and upon every ſuppoſition, to find fault with the ſacred hiſtorians, has endeavoured to turn even their impartiality to their diſadvantage. Having mentioned *common ſenſe* and *common honeſty*, he ſays, that "the "Jews, or the penmen of their traditions, had ſo little of either, "that they repreſent ſometimes a patriarch like Jacob, and ſome-"times a ſaint like David, by characters that belong to none but "the worſt of men†." This according to our author's manner is highly exaggerated. But I think nothing can be a ſtronger proof of the moſt unreaſonable prejudice, than to produce that as an inſtance of the want of *common ſenſe* and *common honeſty*, in thoſe writings, which in any other writers in the world would be regarded as the higheſt proof of their honeſty, their candour, and impartiality; *viz.* their not taking pains to diſguiſe or conceal the faults of the moſt eminent of their anceſtors; eſpecially when

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 304. † Ibid. vol. v. p. 194.

it

it appears, that this is not done from a principle of malignity, or to detract from their merits, ſince their good actions, and the worthy parts of their character, are alſo impartially repreſented, but merely from a regard to truth, and from an unaffected ſimplicity, which every-where appears in their writings, in a manner ſcarce to be paralleled in any other hiſtorians, and which derives a mighty credit to all their narrations. But what above all ſhews the impartiality of Moſes, and of the other ſacred hiſtorians of the Old Teſtament, is, their relating without diſguiſe, not only the faults of their great men, but the frequent revolts and infidelities of the Iſraelites, and the puniſhments which befel them on that account. Lord Bolingbroke has indeed diſcovered, what no man but himſelf would have been apt to ſuſpect, that even this was intended to flatter their pride and vanity; "becauſe though "they are repreſented as rebellious children, yet ſtill as favourite "children—Notwithſtanding all their revolts, God's predilection "for this choſen people ſtill ſubſiſts.—And he renews his pro-"miſes to them of future glory and triumph,—a Meſſiah, a king-"dom that ſhould deſtroy all others, and laſt eternally*."—As to the kingdom of the Meſſiah, which he here refers to as promiſed to the Jews, it was to be of a ſpiritual nature, and was not to be confined to the people of Iſrael alone, but to be of general benefit to mankind. And even the rejecting of that Meſſiah by the body of their nation, and the puniſhments and deſolations to which this ſhould expoſe them, were foretold. And it was certainly a moſt extraordinary expedient to flatter the vanity of a people, to repreſent them as having carried it moſt ungratefully towards God for all his benefits, and though not abſolutely and finally rejected, yet as having frequently drawn upon themſelves the moſt ſignal effects of the divine diſpleaſure. If the view of the ſacred hiſtorians had been to flatter the pride and preſumption of that people, ſurely they might have repreſented them as the objects of the divine favour, without giving ſuch an account of their conduct; from which their enemies have taken occaſion bitterly to reproach them, as the moſt ungrateful and obſtinate race of men that ever appeared upon earth. Nothing could have induced them to record facts which ſeemed to give ſuch a diſad-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 284.

vantageous

vantageous idea of their nation, but an honeſt and impartial regard to truth, rarely to be found in other hiſtorians.

But that which eſpecially diſtinguiſheth Moſes, and the other ſacred hiſtorians, is the ſpirit of unaffected piety that every-where breathes in their writings. We may obſerve throughout a profound veneration for the Deity, a zeal for the glory of his great name, a deſire of promoting his true fear and worſhip, and the practice of righteouſneſs, and to engage men to a dutiful obedience to his holy and excellent laws. Their hiſtory was not written merely for political ends and views, or to gratify curioſity, but for nobler purpoſes. The Moſaical hiſtory opens with an account of the creation of the world, which, by the author's own acknowledgment, is an article of the higheſt moment in religion. It gives an account of the formation of man, of his primitive ſtate, and his fall from that ſtate, of the univerſal deluge, the moſt remarkable event that ever happened to mankind, of the lives of ſome of the patriarchs, and of many moſt ſignal acts of providence, upon which depended the erection and eſtabliſhment of a ſacred polity, the proper deſign of which was to engage men to the adoration of the one living and true God, the Maker and Governor of the world, and of him only, in oppoſition to all idolatry and polytheiſm. The recording theſe things was not only of immediate uſe to the people among whom they were firſt publiſhed, but hath had a great effect in all ages ever ſince, to promote a reverence of the Supreme Being among thoſe who have received theſe ſacred writings; and it tended alſo to prepare the way for the laſt and moſt perfect revelation of the divine will that was ever given to mankind. Nothing therefore can be more unjuſt than the cenſure he hath been pleaſed to paſs on a great part of the Moſaic hiſtory, that it is *fit only to amuſe children with**.

Let us now conſider the objections he hath advanced againſt this hiſtory.

And firſt, he urges that Moſes was not a contemporary author. This is not true with reſpect to a conſiderable part of the hiſtory recorded in the Pentateuch. Many of the things which are moſt objected againſt, eſpecially the extraordinary facts done in Egypt, at the Red Sea, at the promulgation of the law at Sinai, and dur-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 304.

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ing the ſojourning of the Iſraelites in the wilderneſs, were things to which Moſes was not only contemporary, but of which he was himſelf an eye-witneſs. As to that part of the hiſtory which is contained in the book of Geneſis, and which relateth to events which happened before the time of Moſes, it cannot be juſtly objected againſt on that account; except it be laid down as a rule, that no hiſtory is to be believed, which was written by an author who was not contemporary to all the facts which he relates. But this has never yet been allowed as a maxim in judging of the credit of any hiſtory; and, if admitted, would diſcard ſome of the beſt hiſtories now in the world. Nor does our author himſelf pretend to inſiſt upon it as a general rule: but he wants to know "where Moſes got his materials, when he wrote the book of "Geneſis." A moſt unreaſonable demand at this diſtance of time! As to the far greater part of that book, which relates to the lives of the patriarchs, Abraham, Iſaac, Jacob, Joſeph, and to the firſt ſettlement of the Iſraelites in Egypt, theſe are evidently things of which he may be ſuppoſed to have had full information. And with regard to the events which happened before the time of Abraham, the accounts given of them by Moſes are generally very ſhort; conſiſting for the moſt part of little more than the genealogies of perſons and families, interſperſed with a few brief anecdotes, the memory of which was eaſily preſerved. The moſt remarkable event during that period, and of which Moſes gives the moſt particular account, was the univerſal deluge. And this muſt have been then very well known. His not giving into the extravagant antiquities of ſome of the eaſtern nations, and his not attempting to fill up that period with ſuch fabulous romantic accounts as have been invented ſince his time, among Jews, Chriſtians, and Mahometans, is a ſtrong preſumption in his favour; and the plainneſs, ſimplicity, and impartial love of truth, which, as hath been already obſerved, appears in his hiſtory, makes it reaſonable to believe, that he had the accounts he gives from memorials which he knew might be depended upon. What ways they had of tranſmitting the memory of things in thoſe ancient times, we cannot at this diſtance diſtinctly explain, but that they had ſeveral ways of doing this we may be well aſſured. And it has been often obſerved by learned men, through how few ſtages the tradition might run from Adam

to Abraham, and from him to Moſes, conſidering the long lives of the firſt men*. The only thing mentioned by this writer as what Moſes could not have received by hiſtory or tradition, is the circumſtantial account given by him of the creation of the world: with regard to which he obſerves, that "Adam himſelf could only have related to him ſome of the circumſtances "of the ſixth day, but nothing that preceded this." It will be eaſily allowed, that the account of this muſt have been originally owing to extraordinary revelation. And very worthy it was of the divine wiſdom to grant ſuch a revelation to the firſt parents and anceſtors of the human race, ſince it was a matter of great importance to mankind to be well acquainted with it; and our author himſelf owns, that "it leads men to acknowledge a Su-"preme Being, by a proof levelled to the meaneſt underſtand-"ing†." And it may be juſtly concluded, that the account of this was tranſmitted with great care from our firſt parents to their deſcendants, and preſerved among the moſt religious of them: which might the better be done, if, as is very probable, the obſervance of the ſeventh day was appointed from the beginning to preſerve the memorial of it. So that the preſervation of this very important tradition may be accounted for, even abſtracting from Moſes's divine inſpiration, which, if in any thing tradition had become imperfect, might eaſily enable him to ſupply the defects of it.

Another objection, on which his Lordſhip ſeems to lay a great ſtreſs, for invalidating the authority of the Moſaic hiſtory, is, that the principal facts are not confirmed by collateral teſtimony: and by collateral teſtimony he underſtands, the teſtimony of thoſe who had no common intereſt of country, religion, or profeſſion‡. But ſuch collateral teſtimony as this is no way neceſſary to the authenticity of hiſtory. Many hiſtories are very reaſonably believed which have no ſuch collateral teſtimony to confirm them. Such teſtimony is frequently not to be had, nor could reaſonably be expected with relation to many of the facts recorded by

* Mr. Hume makes the great length of men's lives, as recorded in the Moſaic hiſtory, to be an objection againſt it. Eſſay on Miracles, p. 206. But Lord Bolingbroke allows, that the lives of men in the firſt ages of the world were probably much longer than ours. Vol. iii. p. 244.

† Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 253. ‡ Ibid. p. 281, 282.

Moſes.

Moſes. As to that part of the Moſaic hiſtory, which relateth to the times of greateſt antiquity, little help can be expected from collateral teſtimony, ſince there is no hiſtory of thoſe times now extant ſo ancient as his own. And yet there are conſiderable traces of tradition which have been preſerved among other nations, concerning ſome of the moſt remarkable events during that period, as hath been often ſhewn by learned men*; eſpecially with

* His Lordſhip frequently ſpeaks with great contempt of the attempts made by the learned to ſupport the hiſtory of Moſes by collateral teſtimonies, thoſe of Egyptians, Phœnicians, Chaldeans, and even Greeks. See particularly vol. iii. p. 280, 281. Yet he ſays, "The man who gives the leaſt "credit to the Moſaic hiſtory, will agree very readily, that theſe five books "contain traditions of a very great antiquity; ſome of which were preſerved "and propagated by other nations as well as the Iſraelites, and by other "hiſtorians as well as Moſes. Many of them may be true, though they will "not ſerve as vouchers for one another." And he farther obſerves, that "three or four ancient neighbouring nations, of whom we have ſome know-"ledge, ſeemed to have a common fund of traditions, which they varied ac-"cording to their different ſyſtems of religion, philoſophy, and policy." Ibid. p. 282. And ſince he here ſuppoſes, that the nations he refers to had different ſyſtems of religion and policy, and were evidently neither of the ſame country, nation, or religion, with the people of Iſrael, the teſtimonies they give to the facts recorded in the Moſaic writings may be juſtly regarded as *collateral teſtimony*, even according to the account he himſelf is pleaſed to give of it, viz. that it is the teſtimony of thoſe *who had no common intereſt of country, religion, or profeſſion*. So that after all his clamours againſt the Moſaic hiſtory for want of *collateral teſtimony*, he himſelf in effect owns, that, in ſeveral inſtances at leaſt, and with regard to ſome of the facts there related, collateral teſtimonies may be produced, which therefore are very properly taken notice of by the learned. Theſe teſtimonies relate to ſeveral things in the Moſaic account of the creation. The long lives of the firſt men—the general deluge, with ſome of the remarkable particulars recorded by Moſes relating to it—the deſtruction of Sodom and Gomorrah—the excellent character of Abraham, and ſeveral particulars in his life, and that of Iſaac and Jacob—Joſeph's being envied by his brethren, and ſold into Egypt—his great advancement there, and wiſe adminiſtration, and preſerving Egypt in a time of famine—many things relating to Moſes himſelf—his great wiſdom—his being oppoſed by the Egyptian magicians—his leading the Iſraelites out of Egypt, whilſt the Egyptians who purſued them were compelled to deſiſt—his bringing them through the deſerts of Arabia to Mount Sinai—the law given by him as from God—his noble notions of the Deity, and prohibiting the repreſenting or worſhipping him by any corporeal images—many of the peculiarities of that law, different from thoſe of other nations.

with relation to that which is the moſt extraordinary of them all, the univerſal deluge. Nor can any thing be more falſe and contrary to known fact, than what this writer boldly affirms, that "the tradition of Noah's deluge is vouched by no other authority "than that of Moſes; and that the memory of that cataſtrophe "was known only to one people, and preſerved in one corner of "the earth*." Not only has there been a general tradition in confirmation of it†, but there are many proofs of it all over the earth, many phænomena which plainly lead us to acknowledge that there has been ſuch a deluge, and which cannot otherwiſe be reaſonably accounted for.

With reſpect to that part of the hiſtory which relateth to the laws given to the Iſraelites, and the extraordinary facts whereby the authority of thoſe laws was eſtabliſhed, they were not only things of which Moſes had certain knowledge, and in which he could not be miſtaken, but they were of a moſt public nature, and to which the whole nation were witneſſes. The facts were of ſuch a kind, that the accounts of them could not poſſibly have been impoſed by Moſes at that time upon the people, if they had not been true, nor could they have been made to believe that they were done before their eyes, if they had not been done. And theſe facts having been all along from that time received by that people, together with the laws in confirmation of which they were wrought, furniſheth a proof of authenticity to this part of the Moſaic hiſtory, which can ſcarce be paralleled in any other.

I do not ſee how the force of this can be avoided, ſuppoſing Moſes to be the author of the Pentateuch. But this is what Lord Bolingbroke thinks cannot be proved. He has made a kind of repreſentation after his own way of what Mr. Abbadie has offered to this purpoſe; and adds, that it would be hard to find an example of greater trifling‡. But whoſoever will take

The reader may ſee moſt of theſe things collected by *Grotius de Verit. Relig. Chriſt.* lib. i. ſec. 16. I think any impartial perſon will be of opinion, that there is as much collateral teſtimony as could be reaſonably expected concerning things of ſuch remote antiquity, and from perſons who were not of the Jewiſh nation or religion, and ſeveral of whom were profeſſed enemies to both.

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 224.

† See concerning this, *Grotius de Verit. Relig. Chriſt.* lib. i. ſec. 16. See alſo *Revelation examined with Candour*, part i. diſſert. 13, 14.

‡ Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 275, 276.

pains

pains to examine the argument, not as he is pleaſed to repreſent it, but as it ſtands in Mr. Abbadie's own book, will find how little he has offered that can in any degree take off the force of his reaſoning. Indeed it is hard to know what greater proof can reaſonably be deſired of Moſes's being the author of the Pentateuch than is given. The whole nation, among whom thoſe books have been always received with great veneration, as containing the moſt authentic accounts of their hiſtory and their laws, have conſtantly attributed them to Moſes. All thoſe of foreign nations that have mentioned their hiſtory or their laws, have always ſuppoſed Moſes to have been the author of them. Never has it been denied till theſe latter ages, after ſo long a poſſeſſion, upon ſome cavils and exceptions, which are really trifling, and which have been ſufficiently anſwered. And if all this will not be allowed to be a proof, it is impoſſible that any thing of this nature ſhould ever be proved. It hath all the proof which the nature of the thing can admit of; and it would be unreaſonable, by Lord Bolingbroke's own acknowledgment, to demand more. "Com-"mon ſenſe," ſaith he, "requires that every thing propoſed to "the underſtanding, ſhould be accompanied with ſuch proof as "the nature of it can furniſh. He who requires more, is guilty of "abſurdity; he who requires leſs, of raſhneſs*."

There is then all the evidence which can be deſired in ſuch a caſe, that the books containing the original hiſtory and laws given to the people of Iſrael were written by Moſes, as the whole nation to whom the hiſtory belonged, and who were governed by thoſe laws, and received them as the rule of their polity, have conſtantly affirmed. And of this they muſt be allowed to be competent witneſſes. His Lordſhip indeed, with a view to ſhew how little the teſtimony of the Jews is to be depended upon, and how eaſily thoſe laws might be impoſed upon them, mentions "the little time that it took to eſtabliſh the divine authority of "the Alcoran among the Arabs, a people not more incapable to "judge of Mahomet and his book, than we may ſuppoſe the "Iſraelites to have been to judge of Moſes and his book, if he "left any, whether of law alone, or of hiſtory and law both†." But this obſervation is little to the purpoſe. The Arabians were ſufficient vouchers, that the Alcoran was the book left them by

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 246. † Ib. p. 278.

Mahomet, containing the revelations he pretended to have received from heaven. In this they are to be credited. So are the Jews, that the books containing the original hiſtory and laws of their nation were written by Moſes. As to the divine authority of thoſe laws, this muſt be tried by other arguments. But however ſtupid we may ſuppoſe the Arabians to have been, it would not have been in the power of Mahomet to have made them believe, that they themſelves had heard his laws diſtinctly delivered with the moſt amazing ſolemnity from heaven in the preſence of above ſix hundred thouſand men, if there had been no ſuch thing: or that he wrought a ſeries of ſtupendous miracles before their eyes, if he had not done ſo. And accordingly he was too wiſe to put the proof of his own divine miſſion, or of the authority of his laws, upon facts of ſuch a nature: which would have been the moſt effectual way he could have taken to detect and expoſe his own impoſture. But he pretended to have received communications and revelations from heaven, the truth of which depended upon his own credit. The ſame obſervation may be made concerning thoſe celebrated lawgivers of antiquity, who pretended to have received their laws from the gods, as Minos, Numa, and others. None of them ever put the proof of the divine authority of their laws upon public facts of the moſt miraculous and extraordinary nature, done in the preſence of all the people, and for the truth of which they appealed to them. They pretended to directions from oracles, or to ſecret communications with the deity, of which the people had no proof, and which they received ſolely upon their authority. But Moſes put the proof of the divine authority of his laws upon ſenſible facts, of the moſt public nature, and of which the whole body of the people, to whom theſe laws were given, were witneſſes. Appeals were made to the people, at the time when theſe laws were delivered, concerning thoſe facts as done in their ſight, and which they themſelves could not poſſibly deny. The accounts of thoſe facts are ſo interwoven with the laws, that they cannot be ſeparated. Some of the principal motives to engage the people to an obſervance of thoſe laws are founded on thoſe facts. Many of the laws were peculiarly deſigned to preſerve the remembrance of the facts, and cannot be otherwiſe accounted for than by ſuppoſing the truth of thoſe facts to which they relate. And this was the profeſſed deſign of the inſtitution of ſeveral of their

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ſacred rites, which were appointed to be ſolemnly obſerved by the whole of the nation, in every age from the beginning of their polity, *i. e.* from the time when they firſt received theſe laws, and their conſtitution was eſtabliſhed. There were ſeveral public monuments, which ſubſiſted ſeveral ages, to perpetuate the memory of the moſt remarkable of thoſe facts. The people were commanded, as by divine authority, frequently to conſider thoſe facts, and to take care to tranſmit them to their children. To which it may be added, that in all the remaining writings publiſhed at different times, and in different ages, among that nation, whether of an hiſtorical, moral, or devotional kind, there is a conſtant reference to thoſe facts as of undoubted credit and authority. They are repeated on ſo many different occaſions, ſo often and ſolemnly appealed to, that it appeareth, with the utmoſt evidence which the thing is capable of, that theſe facts have been all along univerſally known and acknowledged, and the remembrance of them conſtantly kept up among that people. And upon the truth and authority of theſe facts, their peculiar conſtitution, whereby they were ſo remarkably diſtinguiſhed from all other nations, was plainly founded: nor can it well be conceived, how it could have been eſtabliſhed among them without thoſe facts. It ſtrengthens all this, when it is conſidered, that ſcarce ever was there any people ſo well fitted by their conſtitution for preſerving and tranſmitting the remembrance of their laws and facts, as the people of Iſrael. Their weekly ſabbath, the obſervance of which was bound upon them in the ſtricteſt manner, and which was a conſtant memorial to them of their religion and law: their ſabbatical years, an inſtitution of the moſt extraordinary nature, and which furniſhed a viſible proof of the divine original and authority of that law, and in which it was ordered to be publicly read to the whole nation aſſembled together at their ſolemn feſtivals: the exact care that was taken to keep up the diſtinction of tribes, and the genealogies of the ſeveral families in their tribes, on which their legal right to their inheritances and poſſeſſions depended, and which they could trace to the time when the firſt diviſion of the land was made, and their conſtitution eſtabliſhed, with which the laws and facts were intimately connected: all theſe things laid them under peculiar obligations, and gave them peculiar advantages for preſerving

the remembrance of their law, and the facts done in atteſtation to it. Taking theſe conſiderations together, the evidence for the laws and facts is as ſtrong as can reaſonably be deſired for any facts done in paſt ages. And I am perſuaded the evidence would never have been conteſted, if it had not been for the pretended incredibility of the facts themſelves. But before I come to conſider this, I ſhall take notice of ſome other exceptions made by Lord Bolingbroke to the credit of this hiſtory.

He mentions it as a ſuſpicious circumſtance, that "the prieſts "in Egypt and Judea were intruſted with the public records," and that this ſhews how little they are to be depended upon*. And he aſks, "With what face can we ſuſpect the authenticity "of the Egyptian accounts by Manetho and others, which were "compiled and preſerved by Egyptian prieſts, when we received "the Old Teſtament on the faith of Jewiſh ſcribes, a moſt ig-"norant and lying race†? But it is a great miſtake, or groſs miſrepreſentation to pretend, that the Jewiſh hiſtory and ſacred writings, particularly thoſe of Moſes, were in the hands of the prieſts, or Jewiſh ſcribes, alone. If, like the Egyptian laws and records, they had been wrapt up in ſacred characters and hieroglyphics, which the prieſts only underſtood, and of which they alone were the authoriſed guardians and interpreters, and which were carefully diſguiſed and concealed from the people, there might be ſome ground for this pretence. But, on the contrary, their hiſtory and laws were put into the common language: the people were commanded to make themſelves thoroughly acquainted with the laws that were given them, and with the hiſtory of thoſe facts by which their law was eſtabliſhed. It was urged upon them in the name of God himſelf, to meditate upon them continually, to ſpeak of them in their houſes, and teach them diligently to their children. They were taught to believe that their intereſt in the favour of God, their public and private happineſs, depended upon it. No part of their hiſtory and laws was kept as a ſecret from the people: all was open and undiſguiſed. And this was ſo different from the arts of impoſtors, or of deſigning politicians, as affords a ſtrong preſumption, that all was founded on truth and fact.

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. 225, 226. † Ibid. p. 205.

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Our author is very willing to have it believed, that theſe writings were forged after the time of Moſes; and the time he ſeems to fix upon as the likelieſt for ſuch a forgery is that of the Judges*. But there is not the leaſt foundation for ſuch a ſuppoſition. To ſuppoſe them to have been forged in the time of Joſhua, or the elders that immediately ſucceeded him, is the ſame thing as to ſuppoſe them to have been forged in the days of Moſes himſelf. It muſt then have been very well known, whether theſe were the laws that were given by Moſes, and whether the facts there referred to as things of public notoriety, and known to the whole nation, were really done or not; ſince great numbers muſt have been able to contradict or detect them, if they had been falſe: and after the death of Joſhua, and the elders that had lived in the time of Moſes, and ſeen thoſe mighty acts, who could have had authority enough to have impoſed thoſe laws and facts upon the people? The deliverance out of Egypt, the ſojourning of the Iſraelites in the wilderneſs, the laws and conſtitutions appointed by Moſes in the name of God, the extraordinary facts ſaid to have been wrought by him, their introduction

* His Lordſhip is pleaſed to obſerve, that "the four centuries the Iſraelites paſſed under their Judges, may be well compared to the heroical" (by which he underſtands the fabulous) "ages of the Greeks." The reaſon he gives for this is pretty extraordinary. He ſays, "thoſe of the Greeks were generally baſtards of ſome god or other; and thoſe of the Jews were "always appointed by God to defend his people, and deſtroy their enemies." As if the being a baſtard of ſome god or other, and the being appointed by God for delivering and defending his people, were of the ſame ſignificancy, and equally abſurd and fabulous: though under ſuch a polity as the Moſaical was, their having their Judges and deliverers extraordinarily raiſed and appointed by God, had nothing in it but what was perfectly agreeable to the nature of their conſtitution. And whereas he mentions it to the diſadvantage of the Jewiſh hiſtory under that period, that we there read of Ehud *an aſſaſſin*, and Jephthah *a robber*, and David *a captain of banditti*, it may be obſerved, that this laſt does not properly belong to the times of the Judges, and is only thrown in out of his great good-will to the memory of that illuſtrious prince: and as to the two former, without entering into a particular conſideration of the accounts which are given of them*, it may juſtly be affirmed, that theſe inſtances do not afford a ſhadow of a proof, that the hiſtory is fabulous, and doth not contain a true account of facts.

* See concerning Ehud, *Anſwer to Chriſtianity as old as the Creation*, Vol. ii. p. 334. 2d edit.

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into Canaan, and the manner of their ſettlement there, muſt have been comparatively freſh in their remembrance. It appears by Jephthah's anſwer to the king of the Ammonites, that the people of Iſrael were in his time very well acquainted with their own hiſtory, and with what had happened to them in the time of Moſes, Judges xi. 12, &c. The ſame thing appears from the Song of Deborah, ch. v. 4, 5, and from the anſwer of Gideon, ch. vi. 13. And it cannot without great abſurdity be ſuppoſed, that they could at that time have had a body of laws impoſed upon them as the laws of Moſes, and laws by which their nation had been governed ever ſince his time, though they had not known thoſe laws before: or, that they could have been made to believe, that the facts referred to in thoſe books were facts of which their whole nation had been witneſſes, and which they themſelves had received from their anceſtors, and the memory of which had been conſtantly preſerved among them, though they had never heard of theſe facts: or, that ſuch and ſuch ſacred rites and ordinances had been inſtituted, and conſtantly obſerved and ſolemnized in their nation, in remembrance of thoſe facts, if till then they had been utter ſtrangers to the obſervance of thoſe rites. And what renders this ſtill more improbable is, that during that period there was for the moſt part no general governor who had authority over the whole, as the kings had afterwards. The ſeveral tribes ſeem to have been very much in a ſtate of independency, and to have had the government within themſelves. Few of their Judges exerciſed an authority over all the tribes: nor were any of them prieſts till the time of Eli. In ſuch a ſtate of things, how was it poſſible to have impoſed a new body of laws and hiſtory upon the whole nation, eſpecially laws ſo different from the laws and cuſtoms of all other countries, and which enacted the ſevereſt penalties againſt the idolatries to which the neighbouring nations were ſo ſtrongly addicted, and which the Iſraelites were ſo prone to imitate? If ſome of the tribes had received them, what likelihood is there that all would have done ſo, or would have regarded them as the laws of Moſes, and as obligatory on the whole community, when they were ſo contrary to their own inclinations, and had never been impoſed upon their nation before? Nothing leſs than ſuch an authority as that which Moſes claimed in the name of God himſelf, and which

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was enforced by ſuch illuſtrious divine atteſtations, could have prevailed with them to have ſubmitted to thoſe laws, or to have received thoſe facts. To which it may be added, that it is manifeſt from the account given in the book of Judges, which is the only account of that time that we have to depend upon, that the general ſtate of things during that period was this: The people frequently fell into a compliance with the idolatrous rites of the neighbouring countries: but when public calamities befel them, and which they regarded as puniſhments upon them for their tranſgreſſions of their law, they were made ſenſible of their guilt, and again returned to the obſervance of it, and to the adoration of the only true God as there preſcribed; and they were encouraged by the great things God had formerly done for their nation, to apply to him for deliverance from their oppreſſors. So that every thing during that period ſhews, that the law of Moſes, and the worſhip of God and of him alone, free from idolatry and polytheiſm, was then the eſtabliſhed conſtitution, which they themſelves regarded as of divine authority, notwithſtanding they too often ſuffered themſelves to be ſeduced into deviations from it.

After the æra of the Judges followed that of the Kings. King David lived very early in that period: and it appears with the utmoſt evidence, from the hiſtory and writings of that great prince, that the law of Moſes was then held in the higheſt veneration, as of divine authority, and that the facts there recorded were univerſally believed and acknowledged; and though ſome of the ſucceeding Kings deviated from that law into the idolatries of the neighbouring nations, yet that law never loſt its authority, and the obſervance of it was ſoon reſtored. The deſign of the prophets, of whom there was a ſucceſſion during that period, was to keep the people cloſe to the obſervance of that law: and the extraordinary facts by which the authority of it was eſtabliſhed, were ſtill had in remembrance: and on the credit of that law, and of thoſe extraordinary facts, they ſtill looked upon themſelves to be God's peculiar people. This writer indeed takes upon him to aſſert, that "there were times when they "had actually no body of law among them, particularly in the "reign of Joſiah, when it had been long loſt*." But there is

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 276.

no

no ground to ſuppoſe, that ever there was a time under any of their Kings, when they had actually no body of law among them, or that the book of the law of Moſes had been ever entirely loſt. This cannot be juſtly concluded from the ſurprize expreſſed at Hilkiah's the High Prieſt's finding the book of the law of the Lord in the temple, when they repaired it in Joſiah's reign: for this is juſtly ſuppoſed to be either the original book of the law written by Moſes himſelf, and ordered to be lodged in a coffer at the ſide of the ark, and which was found when the ark was removed, on occaſion of the temple and holy of holies being repaired; or at leaſt an authentic copy of great antiquity and authority, kept in the temple, and which might have been neglected, or thought to have been loſt. But it would be abſurd to imagine, that there was no copy of the law at all remaining in any private hands, or in the hands of any of the Prieſts or Prophets. And it may very reaſonably be conceived, that upon finding an authentic book of the law of ſuch venerable antiquity, the attention of the King and great men might be more thoroughly awakened to the things contained there, and they might make a much ſtronger impreſſion upon them, than they had ever done before, even ſuppoſing they had read or heard the ſame things out of ſome other copy of the law, of leſs authority, and which was not ſo much to be depended upon. There is not one word in the account that is given us of this matter, of what our author mentions, concerning the little time the reading of the book in the preſence of the King took up; from whence he concludes, that it contained nothing but the law ſtrictly ſo called, or the recapitulation of it in the book of Deuteronomy: though if that copy had contained no more than the book of Deuteronomy, this is a collection not only of the principal laws given by Moſes, but of the extraordinary and miraculous facts whereby the divine authority of the law was atteſted. As to what he inſinuates, that all the ſacred writings of the Jews were compoſed after the captivity, and that Eſdras and his ſucceſſors compiled the written law *, I ſhall not add any thing here to what I have elſewhere offered to demonſtrate the palpable falſehood

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 339. vol. v. p. 229.

and

and abſurdity of ſuch a ſuppoſition*. I ſhall only at preſent obſerve, that the preſerving of the Pentateuch among the Samaritans, between whom, from the time of their firſt ſettling in that country, and the Jews, there was a fixed antipathy and oppoſition, affordeth a plain proof, that the code of the Moſaic hiſtory and laws was not the invention or compoſition of Eſdras, but had been preſerved among the Iſraelites of the ten tribes, in place of whom the Samaritans came. And the remarkable conformity there is between the Samaritan and Jewiſh code of the Pentateuch, both in the laws and in the facts, gives a ſignal confirmation of the antiquity and integrity of the Moſaic hiſtory and laws, and how far the Hebrew code is to be depended upon.

But to proceed to Lord Bolingbroke's farther objections. In order to deſtroy the credit of the Moſaic hiſtory, he hath taken all occaſions to charge it with inconſiſtencies and contradictions. Thus he tells us, that the Moſaic account is plainly inconſiſtent with itſelf, in ſuppoſing that the unity of God was the original tradition derived from Adam, and yet that it was loſt, and polytheiſm eſtabliſhed in its ſtead in the days of Serah: or at leaſt of Terah and Abraham, four hundred years after the deluge. He thinks it abſurd to ſuppoſe, "that the knowledge of the exiſt-"ence of that God who had deſtroyed and reſtored the world, "juſt before, could be wholly loſt in the memory of mankind, "and his worſhip entirely forgot, whilſt the eye-witneſſes of "the deluge were yet alive†." The whole force of this objection depends upon his own abſurd way of ſtating the caſe, as if the knowledge of the only true God were ſuppoſed to be then entirely loſt and forgotten among mankind. True religion and the true worſhip of God might have been conſiderably corrupted in that time, and idolatry might have made a great progreſs, though the knowledge of the true God was not entirely loſt and forgotten among men: as our author himſelf, when it is for his purpoſe, thinks fit to own.

With the ſame view of proving inconſiſtencies on the Moſaic hiſtory, he obſerves, that "it is repugnant to human nature "to ſuppoſe, that the Iſraelites ſhould, in the courſe of ſo few ge-

* See "Reflections on Lord Bolingbroke's Letters on the Study and Uſe of Hiſtory," p. 51. & ſeq.

† Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 19, 20. 217. 218.

"nerations,

" nerations, become confirmed and hardened idolaters in Egypt, " and ſhould in ſo ſhort a time not only forget the traditions " of their fathers, and the God of Abraham, of Iſaac, and of " Jacob: but that they ſhould have been as much wedded to ido- " latry as the Egyptians themſelves were*." He himſelf furniſheth an anſwer to this, when he obſerves, that " polytheiſm " and idolatry have a cloſe connexion with the ideas and affec- " tions of rude and ignorant men." And that " the vulgar em- " brace polytheiſm and idolatry very eaſily, even after the true " doctrine of a divine unity has been taught and received†." It may well be conceived, that during their abode in Egypt the Iſraelites might have contracted a great fondneſs for the Egyptian cuſtoms. They might be allured by the power and ſplendor of the Egyptians, to entertain a good opinion of their religion: and the extreme miſery and diſtreſs to which they were reduced by their ſervitude, might lead many of them to queſtion the promiſes made to Abraham and their anceſtors, and make them more ready to deviate from the religion derived to them from their fathers: though there is no reaſon to think they entirely forgot it, but mixed idolatrous rites with it. And even after their deliverance from Egypt, the idolatrous habits and cuſtoms many of them had ſo deeply imbibed, were not ſoon laid aſide. It may eaſily be ſuppoſed, that they would endeavour to reconcile and unite them, with the religion Moſes taught them. And this ſeems particularly to have been the caſe with regard to the worſhip of the golden calf. He mentions it as an incredible thing, that " they " forgot the true God even when he conducted them through " the deſert: They revolted from him even whilſt the peals of " thunder that proclaimed his deſcent on the mountain rattled " in their ears, and whilſt he dictated his laws to them‡." He adds, that " if the miracles recorded to have been wrought had " been really wrought, nothing leſs than the greateſt of all mira- " cles could have made theſe real miracles ineffectual." " I " know farther," ſays he, " moſt intuitively, that no creature of " the ſame nature as I am of, and I preſume the Iſraelites were " human creatures, could reſiſt the evidence of ſuch revelations, " ſuch miracles, and ſuch traditions, as are recorded in the bible:

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 222, 223. † Ib. p. 21, 22. ‡ Ib. p. 223.

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"That they muſt have terrified the moſt audacious, and have "convinced the moſt incredulous*." Thus, with a view to deſtroy the credit of the Moſaic hiſtory, he cries up the irreſiſtible force of the revelations and miracles wrought among the Iſraelites. But perhaps he could not be ſo ſure, as he pretends, what he himſelf might have done in thoſe circumſtances. There is ſcarce any anſwering for the extravagances and inconſiſtencies which human nature may fall into. But he goes all along upon a wrong ſuppoſition, as he had done before, as if the Iſraelites had entirely forgotten God, or intended abſolutely to abandon his worſhip. This was not their intention in the inſtance he ſeems to have had particularly in his view, their worſhipping the golden calf. For it is evident, they did not deſign to renounce the one true God, the God of Iſrael, and to diſcard his worſhip. This appears from Aaron's proclaiming on that occaſion a feaſt to the Lord, *Jehovah;* and from the people's declaring, *Theſe be thy Gods, O Iſrael;* or, as it is elſewhere rendered, *This is thy God, that brought thee out of the land of Egypt*, Exod. xxxii. 4, 5. compared with Nehem. ix. 18. Nothing can be plainer than that they intended by it to worſhip the God of Iſrael, who they knew had ſo lately brought them out of the land of Egypt; and that the worſhip they rendered to the calf was not deſigned to terminate there, but was done with a reference to the Lord Jehovah, whom they were for worſhipping by that ſymbol. They might therefore flatter themſelves, that this was conſiſtent with their acknowledging no other God but one, which had been ſo ſolemnly enjoined them: and that the prohibition of bowing down before any image was deſigned only to forbid the worſhipping falſe gods, not the true God by ſuch a ſymbol. This indeed was an inexcuſable contravention of the law, which had been juſt promulgated with great ſolemnity, and which was intended to forbid their worſhipping and bowing down before any image of the Deity, under any pretence whatſoever. But it was what minds, ſo ſtrongly prepoſſeſſed with the notions and prejudices they had imbibed in Egypt, might be ſuppoſed capable of falling into. I would obſerve, by the way, that the recording this ſtory affords a ſignal proof of the impartiality of the ſacred hiſtorian.

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. p. 225.

Nothing

Nothing but the ſtricteſt regard to truth could have prevailed with him to have inſerted a thing which has been ſo often mentioned to the diſhonour of that people, even by their own writers, and by others ever ſince. And it is very probable, that if the people in after-times durſt have made any alteration in the original ſacred records, they would have ſtruck it out for the ſame reaſon for which Joſephus has omitted it, as he has done ſome other things which he thought would turn to the diſcredit of his nation.

Another attempt this writer makes againſt the credit of the Moſaic hiſtory, relates to the account given of their exode. He thinks it incredible, that "the Iſraelites ſhould bear the oppreſ-"ſions of the Egyptians, when they were become ſo vaſtly nu-"merous, and could bring ſix hundred thouſand fighting men "into the field, which was an army ſufficient to have conquered "Egypt*." But what could be expected from an undiſciplined and unarmed multitude, however numerous, againſt the force of a powerful kingdom? eſpecially when their ſpirits had been depreſſed by a long ſlavery, and a ſeries of grievous oppreſſions; in which caſes vaſt multitudes have been kept in ſubjection by a very few, of which there are many inſtances in hiſtory. In what follows he lets us know, that he thinks the accounts given by pagan authors of their exode not wholly fabulous, and that "an epidemical infectious diſtemper in the Lower Egypt, might "make Pharaoh deſirous to drive the inhabitants of that part of "his kingdom into the neighbouring deſerts.—That many of the "inhabitants of the Lower Egypt were included with the Iſrael-"ites in that tranſmigration; and that a common diſtemper, rather "than a common religion, united them in it." And again, he mentions it as a reaſon of the Iſraelites ſtaying forty years in the wilderneſs, that "it was a ſufficient time to wear out the leproſy, "with which profane hiſtory aſſures us, they were infected†." Thus he is for reviving a falſe and ſcandalous ſtory, the abſurdity of which has been ſo often expoſed. The different accounts given by the pagan authors relating to that matter will naturally lead every intelligent reader to conclude, that the Egyptians endeavoured to conceal and diſguiſe the truth. They could not deny

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 151. † Ibid. p. 142. 144, 145.

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the departure of the Iſraelites out of Egypt, and that it was in a manner and with circumſtances very diſagreeable to them; yet they did not think it conſiſtent with the honour of their own nation, to relate the fact with all its circumſtances as it really happened. But of all the ſtories they trumped up on that occaſion, that of the Iſraelites being expelled on the account of their being generally infected with the leproſy, is the moſt fooliſh and ridiculous. It appears indeed by the laws and conſtitutions of Moſes, that there were leproſies, and other cutaneous diſtempers, among the Iſraelites, as well as among the neighbouring nations in that part of the world; but it alſo appears, with invincible evidence, that the body of that people were not infected with thoſe diſtempers, and that there were comparatively very few who were ſo; ſince the infected were ordered to be put out of the camp, and were treated in ſuch a way as they could not have been treated, if a great part of the people had been leprous. But any ſtory is catched at, however void of all appearance of truth, that tends to caſt diſgrace upon the Jews, and the holy ſcriptures.

The only remaining objection againſt the Moſaic hiſtory, and which indeed ſeems to be what he layeth the principal ſtreſs upon, is, that it is repugnant to the experience of mankind. That "incredible anecdotes are not mentioned ſeldom or occaſionally "in them, as in Livy or other hiſtorians, but the whole hiſtory "is founded on ſuch, and conſiſts of little elſe." He compares thoſe that ſpeak of the Pentateuch as an authentic hiſtory to Don Quixote, and repreſents them as *not much leſs mad than he* was. "When I ſit down (ſays he) to read this hiſtory, I am ready to "think myſelf tranſported into a ſort of fairy land, where every "thing is done by magic and enchantment; where a ſyſtem "of nature very different from ours prevails; and all I meet "with is repugnant to my experience, and to the cleareſt and "moſt diſtinct ideas I have. Almoſt every event in it is incredible "in its cauſes or conſequences, and I muſt accept or reject the "whole*." What his Lordſhip ſays amounts in other words to this: that this hiſtory gives an account of a ſeries of miraculous facts and events, which were not according to the uſual and ordi-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 280.

nary courſe of things. This will be eaſily acknowledged. But it is denied, that this is a juſt or ſufficient objection againſt the truth or authenticity of the hiſtory, or a valid reaſon why it ſhould be rejected. On the contrary, if the facts there related had been only of the ordinary kind, they would not have anſwered the end which the divine wiſdom had in view. It was neceſſary, as the caſe was circumſtanced, that they ſhould be miraculous, and therefore their being miraculous is not a proof of their being falſe: and, conſidered in their cauſes and conſequences, they are ſo far from being incredible, that, taking in their cauſes and conſequences, they claim our belief and veneration. The way of arguing made uſe of by our author, and others of the deiſtical writers in ſuch caſes, deſerves to be remarked. If the facts advanced in proof of a divine revelation may poſſibly be accounted for in a natural way, then they are no miracles at all, and cannot give a ſufficient atteſtation to the truth and authority of a ſupernatural revelation: and if they are of an extraordinary nature, and out of the common courſe of our experience, and manifeſtly tranſcend all human power, then the very extraordinarineſs of the facts, and their being miraculous, though it is proper in ſuch circumſtances they ſhould be ſo, is made a reaſon for rejecting them.

But that we may conſider this matter more diſtinctly, it is to be obſerved, that it cannot be pretended, that the facts recorded in the books of Moſes are abſolutely impoſſible, or beyond the power of God to effect. If any reaſon therefore can be aſſigned to ſhew, that it was proper they ſhould be wrought, and that it was worthy of the divine wiſdom to interpoſe in ſo extraordinary a way, thoſe facts, however miraculous they are ſuppoſed to be, become credible. And if to this it be added, that we have all the proofs that theſe facts were actually done, which the nature of the thing can admit of, or which could be reaſonably deſired, ſuppoſing thoſe things to have really happened, this is all that can be juſtly expected, and it would be unreaſonable to inſiſt on more.

The caſe that is here ſuppoſed is this: That when the nations had fallen from the worſhip and adoration of the one true God, and him only, and became involved in ſuperſtition, polytheiſm, and idolatry, which was ſtill growing and ſpreading, and in danger

ger of becoming univerſal, it pleaſed God, in his great wiſdom and goodneſs, in order to put a check to the ſpreading idolatry, and to preſerve his knowledge and worſhip among men, to interpoſe in an extraordinary way, by eſtabliſhing among a people choſen for that purpoſe a conſtitution of a peculiar kind, the fundamental principle of which was the acknowledgment and adoration of the one true God, in oppoſition to all idolatry and polytheiſm. And, in order to give weight to this conſtitution, it was ſo ordered, that its divine authority was confirmed by a ſeries of wonderful acts, which exhibited the moſt illuſtrious diſplays of his divine power and glory. And this conſtitution was deſigned farther to prepare the way for another diſpenſation, which was intended to be of a more general extent, and in which religion was in due ſeaſon to be publiſhed to the world in its moſt perfect form.

This is a general view of the caſe: let us now examine it more diſtinctly.

And firſt, that at the time when the law of Moſes and the Iſraelitiſh conſtitution were firſt eſtabliſhed, idolatry and polytheiſm were generally ſpread through the nations, is a fact that can ſcarce be conteſted. This appears from all the remaining monuments of thoſe times, as far as we can carry our inquiries. Nor could Lord Bolingbroke deny it. On the contrary he acknowledges, as ſhall be more particularly obſerved afterwards, that ſo great and general was the attachment of the people to idolatry and polytheiſm, that the moſt celebrated legiſlators of antiquity were every-where obliged to fall in with it. And he himſelf aſſerts, that "polytheiſm and idolatry have ſo cloſe a connexion with the ideas and affections of rude and ignorant men, "that one of them could not fail to be their firſt religious prin-"ciple, nor the other their firſt religious practice*." This may be thought to be carrying it too far; but it is certain, that if we judge from fact and experience, there would have been little hope or expectation of recovering mankind from the idolatry and corruption into which they were fallen, without ſome extraordinary expedient, above what either the legiſlators or philoſophers were able to effect.

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 21.

If therefore it pleaſed God to interpoſe in an extraordinary manner for this purpoſe, it ought to be acknowledged to have been a ſignal inſtance both of his wiſdom and of his goodneſs. Our author himſelf repreſents it as a fundamental article of the religion of nature, that "the Supreme Being is the true, and only "true, object of our adoration*." He calls this *that firſt and great principle of natural theology*, and the *angular ſtone of true theiſm*. If ever therefore it was worthy of God to interpoſe at all, or to concern himſelf with the affairs of men, here was a proper occaſion for it, for maintaining and preſerving that fundamental principle of all religion, which was become ſo greatly corrupted and perverted among men, and overwhelmed under an amazing load of ſuperſtitions and idolatries.

This accordingly was the excellent deſign of the Moſaic conſtitution, and of all the extraordinary atteſtations whereby the divine authority of it was eſtabliſhed. It is undeniably manifeſt, that the chief aim of that whole diſpenſation, and the principal point to which all its laws were directed, was to eſtabliſh the worſhip and adoration of the one true God, the maker and preſerver of all things, the ſupreme Lord and governor of the world, and of him alone; and to forbid and ſuppreſs, as far as its influence reached, that idolatry and ſuperſtition, which the wiſe men of other nations humoured and encouraged, and thought it impoſſible to ſubdue. If we compare the Moſaic inſtitution with theirs, we ſhall find a vaſt difference between them. Lord Bolingbroke, ſpeaking of the mighty degree of wealth and power to which the ancient prieſts, who were alſo the ancient philoſophers and wiſe men, arrived in Egypt, Ethiopia, and the great eaſtern kingdoms, tells us, that "the general ſcheme of their policy ſeems to have "been this. They built their whole ſyſtem of philoſophy on "the ſuperſtitious opinions and practices that had prevailed in "days of the greateſt ignorance. They had other expedients "which they employed artfully and ſucceſsfully. Moſt of their "doctrines were wrapped up in the ſacred veil of allegory. "Moſt of them were propagated in the myſterious cypher of "ſacred dialects, of ſacerdotal letters, and of hieroglyphical cha-"racters; and the uſeful diſtinction of an outward and inward

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 98.

"doctrine

" doctrine was invented, one for the vulgar, and one for the " initiated*." He afterwards obſerves, that " the worſhip of one " God, and the ſimplicity of natural religion, would not ſerve " their turn. Gods were multiplied; that devotions, and all the " profitable rites and ceremonies that belong to them, might be ſo " too. The inviſible Mithras, without the viſible, would have " been of little value to the Magi†." It ought therefore to give us a very advantageous notion of the divinity of the law of Moſes, and the truth of his pretenſions, that the method he took was entirely different; and that he was far from making uſe of thoſe arts and expedients, which the ancient prieſts and ſages of the eaſt thought neceſſary. He did not found his theology on falſe popular opinions: on the contrary, the fundamental principle of his ſyſtem was ſubverſive of that polytheiſm, which his Lordſhip repreſents as the natural belief of men in the firſt uncultivated ages, and to which a great part of mankind in every age have been undeniably very prone. No variety or multiplicity of Gods was allowed in his conſtitution: no falſe or idolatrous devotions, in order to bring a greater revenue to the prieſts. He did not conceal his doctrines and laws in the cypher of ſacred dialects, and ſacerdotal letters, and hieroglyphical characters. His laws and doctrines were all deſigned for public univerſal uſe: and there was no ſuch thing in his ſyſtem as ſecret doctrines, to be communicated only to a few, and concealed from the vulgar. On the contrary, it was a maxim that lay at the foundation of that conſtitution, that all the people were to be inſtructed in the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God, free from idolatry, and to be made acquainted with his laws, and the duties there required. And though our author ſpeaks of the allegories in the Old Teſtament, as if *allegory paſſed for a literal relation of facts* among them, it is certain, that in the hiſtorical parts of the bible, particularly in the Moſaic hiſtory, the facts are generally delivered in a plain, ſimple, narrative ſtile, obvious to the capacities of the people.

His Lordſhip ſpeaks with high approbation of the celebrated legiſlators of antiquity, whom he repreſents as *the firſt*, and he *ſuppoſes the beſt miſſionaries that have been ſeen in the world*‡,

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 42, 43, 44: † Ib. p. 49. ‡ Ib. p. 25.

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He inſtances in Mercury, Zoroaſter, Zamolxis, Minos, Charondas, Numa: and having told us, that they all, to give the greater ſanction to their religious and civil inſtitutions, pretended to communications with their gods, or to revelations from them, he declares, that "he believes it probable, that many of the reformers of mankind had diſcovered the exiſtence of the one Supreme Being; but this knowledge might ſeem to them not ſufficiently adapted to the character of the people with whom they had to do." He adds, that "it was neceſſary in their opinion to ſuit their doctrine to the groſs conceptions of the people, and to raiſe ſuch affections and paſſions by human images, and by objects that made ſtrong impreſſions on ſenſe, as might be oppoſed with ſucceſs to ſuch as were raiſed by ſenſible images and objects too, and were deſtructive of order, and pernicious to ſociety. They employed, for reforming the manners of the half-ſavage people they civilized, the dread of ſuperior powers, maintained and cultivated by ſuperſtition, and applied by policy*." Thus Lord Bolingbroke, notwithſtanding the zeal he profeſſes for true theiſm, is pleaſed mightily to admire and applaud the ancient legiſlators, who, by his own account, countenanced and encouraged polytheiſm and idolatry; whilſt he abuſes and vilifies Moſes, the main deſign of whoſe law was to forbid and ſuppreſs it. Indeed the method he took was ſuch as ſhewed that his law had an higher original than human policy. He eſtabliſhed the worſhip of the one true God, the Creator and Governor of the univerſe, and of him only, as the foundation and central point of his whole ſyſtem. Nor did he, in order to *ſuit* his *doctrine to the groſs conceptions of the people*, indulge them in that idolatry and polytheiſm to which the nations were ſo generally and ſtrongly addicted. All worſhip of inferior deities was prohibited; and he expreſsly forbade the Hebrews to repreſent the pure eſſence of the Deity by any corporeal form, that he might accuſtom them to a more ſpiritual adoration of the Supreme Being; and if, as our author alleges, he adopted ſome of the Egyptian rites and cuſtoms in accommodation to the weakneſs and prejudices of the people †, though this is far from being

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 26, 27. † Ibid. p. 31. 44.

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ſo certain as he pretends*, we may be ſure they were only ſuch as might be innocently uſed, and not ſuch as had a tendency to lead the people into idolatry, or out of which idolatry aroſe: for all things of this kind he ſtrongly and moſt expreſsly prohibited: and therefore commanded the people *not to do after the doings of the land of Egypt*, or to *walk after their ordinances*, Lev. xviii. 3. The other legiſlators pretended, as well as he, to communications with the Divinity; yet whatever their private opinion might be, they durſt not ſo much as attempt to take the people off from the ſuperſtition and idolatry they were ſo fond of. The reaſon was, they were ſenſible that their communication with the

* It appears indeed, from the accounts of the Egyptian rites and cuſtoms given by ſome ancient writers, that there is a reſemblance between ſome of thoſe rites and cuſtoms, and thoſe that were inſtituted in the Moſaical law: but there is no proof that the latter was derived from the former; nor indeed is there any proof which can be depended on, that thoſe particular rites were in uſe among the Egyptians ſo early as the time of Moſes, ſince the authors who mention them are of a much later date. And notwithſtanding all that hath been ſaid of the improbability of the Egyptians borrowing them from the Iſraelites, yet the very high opinion the Egyptians of his time had conceived of Moſes, as appeareth from Exod. xi. 3. and the great impreſſions which we may well ſuppoſe to have been made upon them by the extraordinary divine interpoſitions, in favour of the Iſraelites, at their departure out of Egypt, and during their abode in the wilderneſs, as well as at their entrance into the land of Canaan, of which the Egyptians could ſcarce be ignorant, might give occaſion to their copying after ſome of the Moſaic inſtitutions. They might poſſibly apprehend, that this would tend to draw down divine bleſſings upon them, or to avert judgments and calamities. Theſe obſervances they might afterwards retain, though in ſucceeding ages, when the firſt impreſſions were over, they were too proud to acknowledge from whence they had originally derived them. Beſides, it ſhould be conſidered, that ſeveral of the rites and cuſtoms common to the Iſraelites and Egyptians, might be derived to both from the patriarchal times. The famous M. le Clerc, notwithſtanding the zeal he frequently expreſſeth for the hypotheſis, that many of the Moſaic rites were inſtituted in imitation of the Egyptians, yet in his notes on Levit. xxiii. 10. ſpeaking of the offering up of the firſt-fruits to God, obſerves, that this was neither derived from the Egyptians to the Hebrews, nor from the Hebrews to the Egyptians, but was derived to both from the earlieſt ages, and probably was originally of divine appointment. The ſame he thinks of the oblation of ſacrifices; and adds, that there were perhaps many other things which both people derived from the ſame ſource. *Et aliæ fortè multa ex eâdem indidem traxit uterque populus.* So that many of thoſe Jewiſh obſervances which ſome learned men, and M. le Clerc among the reſt, have been fond of deriving from the Egyptians, had probably been in uſe in the times of the ancient patriarchs, and were retained, and farther confirmed, as well as other additional rites inſtituted, in the law of Moſes.

Deity was only pretended; and therefore they could not depend upon any extraordinary aſſiſtance to carry their deſigns into execution: but Moſes not only pretended to have received his laws from God, but knew that it really was ſo, and was able to give the moſt convincing proofs of his divine miſſion. He was ſure of a ſupernatural aſſiſtance, and this enabled him to accompliſh what the ableſt legiſlators of antiquity did not dare to attempt. His Lordſhip obſerves, that "the Iſraelites had the moſt ſingular "eſtabliſhment, eccleſiaſtical and civil, that ever was formed*." And it muſt be acknowledged to have been in many reſpects very different from that which obtained in other nations. And it can hardly be conceived, how, as things were circumſtanced, it could have been eſtabliſhed among the Iſraelites, but in an extraordinary and miraculous way. The very nature of the conſtitution furniſhes a ſtrong preſumption of the truth of the miraculous facts by which the authority of it was atteſted and confirmed, and rendereth the whole account conſiſtent and credible.

The chief objection which is urged againſt this, is drawn from the abſurdity of ſuppoſing, that God ſhould ſelect a people to himſelf, among whom he would erect a peculiar conſtitution for preſerving his knowledge and worſhip, apart from the reſt of mankind. Or however, "if he had thought fit, that the ſacred "depoſit ſhould be truſted to a people choſen to preſerve it till "the coming of the Meſſiah, no people was leſs fit than the Iſrael-"ites to be choſen for this great truſt, on every account. They "broke the truſt continually. The revelations made to them "were, as Mr. Locke obſerves, ſhut up in a little corner of the "world, amongſt a people, by that very law which they received "with it, excluded from a commerce and communication with "the reſt of mankind. A people ſo little known, and contemned "by thoſe that knew them, were very unfit and unable to pro-"pagate the doctrine of one God in the world." He aſks, "Wherefore then was this depoſit made to them? It was of no "uſe to other nations before the coming of Chriſt, nor ſerved "to prepare them for the reception of the goſpel. And after "his coming, it was in this great reſpect of little uſe, if of any, "to the Jews themſelves†."

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 144. † Ibid. p. 242, 243.

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There is ſcarce any thing that has been more the ſubject of ridicule, than the Jews being a choſen race, diſtinguiſhed from all other nations of the earth. And yet that the Jews were remarkably diſtinguiſhed above other nations, for the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God, is a matter of fact which cannot poſſibly be denied. Whoſoever reads the monuments of heathen antiquity, of which there are very large remains extant, the conſtitution of their laws, and ſyſtem of their policy, and the writings of their hiſtorians, poets, and philoſophers, and compares them with the Jewiſh, will find an aſtoniſhing difference, that cannot but ſtrike every man who conſiders it. It muſt be acknowledged, that many of the heathen nations, particularly thoſe of Greece and Rome, were renowned for learning and politeneſs, peculiarly eminent for their knowledge in the liberal arts and ſciences, and for the fineneſs of their taſte in works of genius and literature, which has rendered them the admiration of all ſucceeding ages. But in matters of religion we meet everywhere with the moſt unqueſtionable proofs of the groſſeſt idolatry and polytheiſm, in which not only were the vulgar univerſally involved, but it was countenanced and practiſed by the wiſeſt and greateſt men. That public worſhip which was inſtituted by their moſt celebrated legiſlators, and a conformity to which was recommended by the philoſophers, was directed to a multiplicity of deities. On the other hand, if we turn our views to the Jews, a people no way eminent for their knowledge in the arts and ſciences, we ſhall find that monotheiſm, the firſt and great principle, as he calls it, of natural theology, the acknowledgment and worſhip of the one true God, the Maker and Lord of the univerſe, and of him only, was the fundamental principle of their conſtitution and of their ſtate; all worſhip of inferior deities, and of the true God by images, was moſt expreſsly prohibited in their laws*. If we examine their writings, we may obſerve, that

* Lord Bolingbroke takes notice, that Moſes had made the deſtruction of idolatrous worſhip a principal object of his laws: and the zeal againſt images was great among the Jews. But he pretends that it was only carved or emboſſed images that were held in horror: but a flat figure, either painted or embroidered, was allowed; as, he thinks, is very clear from a paſſage which he has read, quoted from Maimonides. And he intimates, that "picture-worſhip came from the Jews to the "Chriſtians, as did that of carved images from the pagans." See vol. iv. p. 308.

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that they every-where diſcover the profoundeſt veneration for the Deity; they abound with the ſublimeſt ſentiments of his divine Majeſty, his incomparable perfections, his ſupreme dominion, and all-diſpoſing providence, and every-where expreſs an utter deteſtation of all idolatry and polytheiſm. Nor is this the ſpirit of their moral and devotional writings only, but of their hiſtorical too; the principal deſign of which is to promote the great ends of religion, by repreſenting the happy ſtate of their nation, when they adhered to the worſhip of God, and perſiſted in obedience to his laws, and the calamities and miſeries that befel them as a puniſhment for their defections and revolts. Their very poetry was vaſtly different from that of the heathen nations; not deſigned, like theirs, to celebrate the praiſes, the amours, the exploits of their fictitious deities, but fitted to inſpire the nobleſt ideas of God, and containing the moſt elevated deſcriptions of his glory and perfection.

It is natural therefore to inquire whence comes this amazing difference between the Jews and the moſt learned and civilized heathen nations in the knowledge and worſhip of the Deity. It is his Lordſhip's own obſervation, that "without revelation the "belief of the unity of God could not be the faith of any one "people, till obſervation and meditation, till a full and vigorous

If that were the *caſuiſtry*, as he calls it, of the Jews, it is certainly not chargeable on their law, which moſt expreſsly prohibited the worſhipping not only of *graven images*, but *the likeneſs* of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath. But this is one inſtance, among many which might be produced, of the wrong uſe his Lordſhip has made of his too ſuperficial reading. He was ready to take up with the ſlighteſt appearances in favour of any darling point he had in view. He has here confounded the making or drawing pictures or images with the worſhipping them. Neither Maimonides, nor any other Jewiſh author, ever pretended that it was lawful for them to worſhip painted, any more than carved, images. But as to the lawfulneſs of making images, or of painting and embroidering them, there were different opinions. Some carried it ſo far, that they were not for allowing any figures at all, either painted or carved, not ſo much as for ornament, for fear of giving occaſion to idolatry. Others thought it lawful to have the figures of animals either painted or carved, except thoſe of men, which were not allowed to be carved or embоſſed, though they might be painted, or drawn upon a plane: but neither the one nor the other were to be worſhipped. If his Lordſhip had conſulted Mr. Selden, whom he hath ſometimes quoted, he would have found all this diſtinctly repreſented. *De jure nat. et gent. apud Hebr.* lib. xi. cap. 6, 7, 8, 9. There is no foundation, therefore, for his new diſcovery, that picture-worſhip came from the Jews to the Chriſtians.

"exerciſe

"exerciſe of reaſon, made it ſuch*." And again, he tells us, that "the rational, the orthodox belief, was not eſtabliſhed, nor "could be ſo, till the manhood of philoſophy†." How comes it then, that the public acknowledgment and adoration of the one true God, free from polytheiſm and idolatry, was the eſtabliſhed religion of the Jews only? Were they the only people who had reaſon in a full and vigorous exerciſe, and among whom philoſophy was arrived at its manhood? If ſo, it is wrong to repreſent them, as the deiſtical writers have frequently done, as the moſt ſtupid of the human race, a people *ignorant and barbarous*, as he and Mr. Hume calls them. Nor had he a right to laugh at Mr. Abbadie, who, he ſays, has repreſented them as a *nation of ſages and philoſophers*‡. It will be readily allowed, that the Jews were not of themſelves more wiſe and knowing, or better philoſophers than other nations, or that they had made deeper obſervations and reflections; on the contrary, they were inferior to ſome in ſeveral branches of ſcience. We have all the reaſon therefore in the world to conclude, that, if left to themſelves, they would have been involved in the common polytheiſm and idolatry, as well as the nations round them: and that it was owing only to their having had the advantage of an extraordinary revelation, and to their peculiar conſtitution, which was of divine original, and which had been confirmed by the moſt illuſtrious atteſtations, that they became ſo remarkably diſtinguiſhed.

Lord Bolingbroke was very ſenſible how unfavourable this is to his cauſe, and therefore finds great fault with Mr. Locke for aſſuming, that the belief and worſhip of the one true God was the national religion of the Iſraelites alone, and that it was their particular priviledge and advantage to know the true God, and his true worſhip, whilſt the heathen nations were in a ſtate of darkneſs and ignorance. To take off the force of this ſeems to be the principal deſign of his third Eſſay, which is of *the riſe and progreſs of monotheiſm*§. But what he offers to this purpoſe is extremely trifling. He is forced quite to alter the true ſtate of the queſtion, and ſuppoſes Mr. Locke and the Chriſtian

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 20.
† Ibid. p. 22, 23.
‡ Ibid. vol. iii. p. 283.
§ Ibid. vol. iv. p. 187, et ſeq.

divines

divines to aſſert, that there was not any knowledge or worſhip of the true God in the world at all before the erection of the Iſraelitiſh polity; and that all the nations, except the Iſraelites, had been ignorant of the true God from the beginning. And then he argues, that "this implies that the Iſraelites were a na-"tion from the beginning;" and gravely aſks, "Were they ſo, "if we reckon from Adam, or even from Noah, or even from "the vocation of their father Abraham*?" Thus he frames a ridiculous hypotheſis for his adverſaries, and then endeavours to expoſe it: whereas they maintain, what he thinks fit to deny, that the knowledge and worſhip of the true God was the original primitive religion of mankind, derived from the firſt parents and anceſtors of the human race: but that before the time of Moſes, the nations were generally lapſed into polytheiſm and idolatry, which appears from his own acknowledgment to have been the caſe.

He affirms indeed, "it is plain that the knowledge of the one "true God would have been preſerved in the world, if no ſuch "people as the Jews had ever been. And nothing can be more "impertinent than the hypotheſis, that this people, the leaſt fit "perhaps on many accounts that could have been choſen, was "choſen to preſerve this knowledge. It was acquired, and it "was preſerved independently of them, among the heathen phi-"loſophers. And it might have become, and probably did be-"come, the national belief in countries unknown to us, or even "in thoſe who were fallen back into ignorance, before they ap-"pear in the traditions we have†." What an extraordinary way of talking is this! He argues from the ſuppoſed national belief of countries unknown to us, and of which he confeſſes we have no traditions extant, to ſhew that religion would have been preſerved in the world, if no ſuch people as the Jews had ever been. As to the heathen philoſophers, among whom, he ſays, the knowledge of the true God was preſerved, it is certain, and he himſelf frequently owns it, that whatever knowledge ſome of them had this way, it was of little uſe to hinder the polytheiſm and idolatry of the people; and that, inſtead of reclaiming them

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 233. † Ibid. p. 79.

from

from it, they fell in it with themſelves, and even encouraged and adviſed the people to a compliance with the public laws and cuſtoms, by which polytheiſm was eſtabliſhed.

Thus it appears, that after all the outcry and ridicule againſt the Jews as the unfitteſt people in the world to have the ſacred depoſit of the acknowledgment and adoration of the one true God committed to them, they were the only people concerning whom we have any proofs that they made a public national acknowledgment of this great principle, and among whom it was eſtabliſhed as the fundamental law of their ſtate*. It is urged indeed, that their conſtitution had little effect upon them: that "their hiſtory is little elſe than a relation of their rebelling and "repenting; and theſe rebellions, not thoſe of particular men, "ſurprized and hurried into diſobedience by their paſſions, but "national deliberate violations of the law, in defiance of the Su-"preme Being†." But if we compare the hiſtory of the Jews with that of the heathen nations, we ſhall find a very remarkable

* His Lordſhip ſhews a ſtrange unwillingneſs, that the Jews ſhould have the honour of having had the knowledge and worſhip of the true God among them, in a degree far ſuperior to other nations. Sometimes he inſinuateth, as ſome others of the deiſtical writers have done, that the Iſraelites borrowed it from the Egyptians (though according to his own repreſentation of the caſe, this was among the Egyptians part of their ſecret doctrine, not communicated to the vulgar), or from the Babylonians. And then the wonder will be how it came to paſs, that the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God was preſerved among the Jews, whilſt the Egyptians and Babylonians were immerſed in the moſt abſurd and ſtupid idolatries. He thinks he might *venture to affirm*, that Abraham *himſelf learned the orthodox faith, viz.* relating to the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God, in Egypt and *the neighbouring countries* *. And he had ſaid the ſame thing before †. There cannot be a greater proof of unreaſonable prejudice than this. It is ſurmiſed not only without evidence, but againſt it, ſince nothing can be plainer from the account given us of Abraham, than that he knew and worſhipped the one true God before he came into Canaan at all, and therefore long before he went into Egypt. Nor did he learn it from the Chaldeans, among whom idolatry had then made a conſiderable progreſs, as appears from Joſh. xxiv. 2. And agreeably to this is the univerſal tradition of the Eaſt; that he was the great reſtorer of the ancient true religion, which had been corrupted with idolatry.

† Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 136.

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 203. † Ibid. vol. iii. p. 299.

difference

difference between them. Notwithſtanding all the faults and defections of the former, and though they too often fell into idolatries and vicious practices, in a conformity to the cuſtoms of the neighbouring countries, they again recovered from them, and returned to the acknowledgment and adoration of the one true God, and him only, and often continued for a conſiderable number of years together in the profeſſion and practice of the true religion, free from idolatry; of which there are many proofs in all the ages of their nation, from the days of Moſes to the Babyloniſh captivity; during the time of their Judges, Kings, &c. as every one knows that is at all acquainted with their hiſtory. This was owing to the revelation they enjoyed: they ſtill had recourſe to their law, and by that reformed themſelves, and returned to the pure worſhip of God according to that law; to which, after the Babyloniſh captivity, in which they had ſuffered ſo much for their defections and revolts, they adhered more cloſely than ever. But among the heathen nations, even thoſe of them that were moſt learned and civilized, ſuch as the Grecians and Romans, all was one continued courſe of polytheiſm, and the moſt abſurd idolatries: nor can we name any period of their hiſtory, in which they laid aſide the public polytheiſm, and returned to the acknowledgment and adoration of the one true God, and of him only. It muſt be ſaid, therefore, that the Jewiſh hiſtory doth indeed furniſh plain proofs of what the author obſerves, the proneneſs of mankind in all ages to polytheiſm and idolatry; but it ſhews at the ſame time, that, by virtue of their peculiar conſtitution, the worſhip of God was maintained among them in a manner in which it was not in any other nation: and this affordeth a ſignal proof of the benefit of revelation, and how far ſuperior it is to the efforts of the wiſeſt lawgivers and philoſophers.

It appears then, that the Moſaic conſtitution did anſwer very valuable ends. By this there was a people preſerved, among whom the knowledge and adoration of the one living and true God was maintained, in a world over-run with ſuperſtition and idolatry, and to whom an admirable ſyſtem of laws was given. And nowithſtanding all that is ſaid about the people of Iſrael being ſhut up in a corner of the earth, they were placed in an advantageous ſituation, in the centre of the then known world, between

between Egypt and Arabia on the one hand, and Syria, Chaldea, and Aſſyria on the other, among whom the firſt great empires were erected, and from whence knowledge and learning ſeem to have been derived to the weſtern parts of the world. And they were alſo in the neighbourhood of Sidon and Tyre, the greateſt emporiums in the world, from whence ſhips went to all parts, even the moſt diſtant countries. Their peculiar conſtitution, whereby they were ſo remarkably diſtinguiſhed from other nations, together with the extraordinary things God had done for them, had a natural tendency to put the neighbouring people upon inquiring into the deſign of all this, which would be apt to lead them to the adoration of the one true God, and into the knowledge of the true religion in its moſt neceſſary and important principles, and to diſcover to them the folly and unreaſonableneſs of their own ſuperſtition and idolatry. That this was really part of the deſign which the divine wiſdom had in view in this conſtitution, and that therefore it was intended to be of uſe to other nations beſides the people of Iſrael, plainly appears from many paſſages of Scripture*. They were indeed kept diſtinct from other people, and it was neceſſary for wiſe ends they ſhould be ſo: but they were always ready to receive among them thoſe of other nations that worſhipped the one true God, though they did not conform to the peculiar rites of their polity: and in the moſt flouriſhing times of their ſtate, particularly in the reigns of David and Solomon, they had an extenſive dominion and correſpondence; and afterwards they had frequent intercourſe with Egypt, Syria, Aſſyria, Chaldea, and Perſia. And if we conſider what is related concerning the Queen of Sheba, and Hiram, King of Tyre, as well as the memorable decrees of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, Darius the Mede, Cyrus, Darius Hyſtaſpes, and Artaxerxes, Kings of Perſia, the greateſt monarchs then upon earth, and who publiſhed to the world the regard and veneration they had for the Lord Jehovah, the God whom the Jews worſhipped; it is very probable that the fame of their laws, and the remarkable interpoſitions of providence on their behalf, ſpread far and wide among the nations, and contributed, in more

* See particularly Exod. vii. 15. ix. 16. xiv. 4. Numb. xiv. 13. 14, 21. Deut. iv. 6. 1 Kings viii. 41, 42, 43. Pſal. xxvi. 3.

inſtances

inſtances than is commonly imagined, to keep up ſome knowledge of the true God, the Maker and Lord of the univerſe, and to give ſome check to the prevailing idolatry, and to preſerve the ancient patriarchal religion from being utterly extinguiſhed. To which it may be added, that, in the latter times of their ſtate, vaſt numbers of the Jews were diſperſed through Egypt, Babylonia, Perſia, and other parts of the eaſt; and afterwards through the Leſſer Aſia, and the ſeveral parts of the Roman empire: and they every where turned many of the Gentiles from the common idolatry and polytheiſm; which the philoſophers were ſcarce able to effect in a ſingle inſtance. It appears then, that the ſetting apart that people in ſo extraordinary a manner, the revelation that was given them, and the marvellous acts of divine providence towards them, were fitted for having an extenſive effect for the advantage of other nations as well as their own, and actually had that effect in multitudes of inſtances. By this conſtitution, there was a light ſet up, ſhining in a dark place, to which other nations might have recourſe. And if, inſtead of making uſe of it as they ought to have done, they generally neglected it, and even hated and deſpiſed the Jews for having a religion ſo oppoſite to their own, and condemning their ſuperſtitions and idolatries; the fault is to be charged upon themſelves, who neglected thoſe means and helps, as they had done before the diſcoveries made to them by ancient tradition, and which had been originally derived from revelation, and by the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence. Beſides this, what farther ſhews the great propriety and uſefulneſs of this peculiar conſtitution, and the revelation given to the people of Iſrael, is, that it had a great tendency to prepare the world for receiving that more perfect diſpenſation which was to ſucceed it, and which was to be of a more general extent, and to be more univerſally diffuſed. The firſt harveſt of converts to Chriſtianity was among the Jews and their proſelytes, of whom great numbers were brought over to the Chriſtian faith. The Jewiſh Scriptures were generally diſperſed, and had ſpread the knowledge of God, and had raiſed an expectation of a glorious and divine perſon, by whom a new and moſt excellent diſpenſation was to be introduced, and the Gentiles were to be brought over, more generally than had hitherto been done, from their ſuperſti-

tions

tions and idolatries, from their abominable vices and corruptions, to the pure worſhip of God, and the knowledge and practice of true religion. This glorious perſon was foretold and deſcribed in the Jewiſh prophecies by many remarkable characters, which being accompliſhed in our Saviour gave a moſt illuſtrious atteſtation to his divine miſſion. And theſe prophecies were kept more clear and diſtinct, by being in the hands of a peculiar people as the depoſitaries of them: whereas if they had been, like other traditions, left merely at large among the nations, they would probably in proceſs of time have been corrupted and loſt, and the teſtimony ariſing from them muſt have fallen.

Taking all theſe conſiderations together, it appears, that the peculiar Jewiſh œconomy anſwered many valuable and important ends: and that therefore it was no way unworthy of the divine wiſdom to interpoſe in an extraordinary manner to give a divine atteſtation to it. And that the miraculous facts, if really done, were every way ſufficient for this purpoſe, our author himſelf does not deny. On the contrary, he looks upon them to have been ſo ſtrong and convincing, that it would have been impoſſible to reſiſt them; and he thinks they muſt have been ſufficient, if they had been really done, to have brought over all mankind to the belief and acknowledgment of the one true God, not only in that age, but in all ſucceeding ages. His manner of expreſſing himſelf is remarkable. He ſays, that "the reviving and "continuing the primitive faith and worſhip by ſuch a ſeries of "revelations and miracles among one people, would have made "any revival of them unneceſſary among any other; becauſe "they would have been more than ſufficient to continue them "uncorrupted over the whole world; not only till the vocation "of Abraham, four hundred years after the deluge; not only till "the coming of the Meſſiah, two thouſand years after that, but "even to this hour, and to the conſummation of all things*." Not to inſiſt upon the great abſurdity of his ſuppoſing, that the miracles wrought among the Iſraelites ſo long after the vocation of Abraham, would have been ſufficient to have kept the true religion uncorrupted till the vocation of Abraham, a blunder which could only have been owing to the moſt inexcuſable ne-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 214.

gligence in writing; I think it follows from his own conceſſions, that the miracles and other extraordinary methods made uſe of for the eſtabliſhment of the Moſaic œconomy, were of ſuch a nature as to be well fitted to the end for which they were deſigned, the revival and eſtabliſhment of the worſhip of the one true God, in oppoſition to idolatry and polytheiſm. And though it be wrong to ſuppoſe, as he moſt abſurdly does, that they muſt have eſtabliſhed it among all mankind, and have prevented all deviations from it in all ages and nations; yet it will be acknowledged, that thoſe facts were of ſuch a kind as to have been ſufficient to convince all thoſe to whom they were known, that the laws, in atteſtation to which they were wrought, were of a divine original. Accordingly the people of Iſrael, notwithſtanding their proneneſs to idolatry, and their obſtinate prejudices, were brought to ſubmit to thoſe laws, as of divine authority, and to receive them as the rule of their polity. And though they fell off on ſeveral occaſions to a compliance with the idolatries of the neighbouring nations, which they mixed with their own rites, yet the remembrance and belief of thoſe facts, which always continued among them, had mighty effects, in every age of their ſtate, to bring them back to the true worſhip of God, and to an obedience to their laws. And they have had a great effect ever ſince, wherever they have been believed, to fill men with a holy fear of God, and with the moſt adoring thoughts of his divine unequalled majeſty and glory. This effect they continue to have among Chriſtians, and are like to have to the end of the world.

It is no juſt objection againſt the truth of the facts, that they come to us through the hands of the Jews: for what other teſtimony can be reaſonably deſired, or can the nature of the thing admit of, than the concurrent teſtimony of that people, to whom the laws were given, and among whom the facts were done? A teſtimony continued throughout all the ages of their nation, and appearing in all their records and monuments. The facts were done among themſelves, and therefore in the nature of things could only be witneſſed by themſelves. If thoſe of any other nation had recorded them, they muſt have had their accounts from the people of Iſrael: and if they had declared their belief of thoſe facts, and of the divine authority of thoſe laws, there would

would have been an equal pretence for rejecting their teſtimony, as for rejecting that of the Jews. But it is in truth very abſurd to make it an objection, that the accounts of theſe facts are tranſmitted to us by thoſe who were the only proper perſons to give an account of thoſe facts, and by whom alone thoſe accounts could have been originally given, if they had been true. If it be pretended, that the facts were feigned by them to do honour to their nation, it muſt be conſidered, that, as was before hinted, they are ſo circumſtanced, and mixed with ſuch diſadvantageous accounts of the temper and conduct of that people, as no man would have feigned who had their honour in view, or who had not a greater regard to the truth of the facts, than to the humouring and flattering that people. For it is plain, that the facts might have been ſo contrived, if they had been fictitious, as to have ſaved the honour of their nation, and not to have given occaſion to the ſevere cenſures and reproaches which have been caſt upon them in all ages on that account. And what farther derives great credit to the relations of thoſe extraordinary and miraculous facts, is, that the books in which they are contained not only appear to have been written with an unaffected ſimplicity, and a ſincere impartial regard to truth, mixed with a profound veneration for the Deity, but they contain the moſt remarkable predictions of future events, which it was impoſſible for any human ſagacity to foreſee; particularly relating to the future fates of that nation; the ſurpriſing revolutions they ſhould undergo; the calamities, captivities, and deſolations, that ſhould befal them; their being ſcattered and diſperſed all over the face of the earth, and every-where expoſed to hatred, contempt, and reproach, and yet ſtill wonderfully preſerved as a diſtinct people, as we ſee they are at this day; notwithſtanding they have for ſo many ages loſt their genealogies, and been deprived of their moſt valued privileges, and rendered incapable of exerciſing their moſt ſolemn ſacred rites as preſcribed in their law, and without any prophets raiſed up among them, and acknowledged by themſelves as ſuch, to ſupport their hopes. Theſe are things for which no parallel can be found in any other nation upon earth. So that the preſent ſtate of that people, in all reſpects ſo extraordinary, is a living proof of the truth and divinity of thoſe writings which contain an account of the laws that were origi-

nally given them, and of the wonderful facts by which thoſe laws were enforced and eſtabliſhed. This is a proof ſtill ſtronger to us, than it could have been in the ages ſoon after thoſe books were written, and affordeth one inſtance in which the evidence of thoſe facts, inſtead of being diminiſhed by time, has acquired new ſtrength and force.

You will forgive the length of this letter, as I was willing to lay together in one view all that I thought neceſſary for clearing and eſtabliſhing the truth of the Moſaic hiſtory againſt our author's objections, and which, if it be well ſupported, the divinity of thoſe laws, and of that conſtitution, follows with invincible evidence.

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LETTER XXIX.

The excellent Nature and Tendency of the Moſaic Writings and the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament—Lord Bolingbroke treats it as Blaſphemy to ſay that they are divinely inſpired—A Summary of his Objections againſt their divine Original and Authority—His Charge againſt the Scriptures, as giving mean and unworthy Ideas of God, conſidered at large—The Repreſentations he himſelf gives of God, and of his Providence, ſhewn to be unworthy, and of the worſt Conſequence—Concerning God's being repreſented in Scripture as entering into Covenant with Man—The Pretence of his being deſcribed as a tutelary God to Abraham, and to the People of Iſrael, and of his being degraded to the meaneſt Offices and Employments, diſtinctly examined—The Paſſages in which bodily Parts ſeem to be aſcribed to God, not deſigned to be taken in a literal Senſe—The Scripture itſelf ſufficiently guards againſt a wrong Interpretation of thoſe Paſſages—In what Senſe human Paſſions and Affections are attributed to the Supreme Being—A remarkable Paſſage of Mr. Collins to this Purpoſe.

SIR,

THE deſign of my laſt letter was to vindicate the truth and credit of the Moſaic hiſtory, and of the extraordinary facts there related. And if that hiſtory be admitted as true, the divine original and authority of the Moſaic conſtitution is eſtabliſhed. But beſides the external proofs ariſing from the extraordinary and miraculous facts, whoſoever with an unprejudiced mind looks into the revelation itſelf as contained in the ſacred writings of the Old Teſtament, may obſerve remarkable internal characters, which demonſtrate its excellent nature and tendency. At preſent I ſhall obſerve, that we are there taught to form the worthieſt notions of God, of his incomparable perfections, and of his governing providence, as extending over all his works, particularly towards mankind. We are at the ſame time inſtructed in the true ſtate of our own caſe, as we are weak, dependent, guilty creatures, and are directed to place our whole hope and truſt in

God alone, and to refer all to him, as our chiefeſt good, and higheſt end; to be thankful to him for all the good things we enjoy, and to be patient and reſigned to his will under all the afflictive events that befal us. Our moral duty is there ſet before us in its juſt extent. The particulars of it are laid down in plain and expreſs precepts, enforced upon us in the name and by the authority of God himſelf, whoſe love of righteouſneſs, goodneſs, and purity, and juſt deteſtation of vice and wickedneſs, are repreſented in the ſtrongeſt manner. Thoſe ſacred writings every-where abound with the moſt encouraging declarations of his grace and mercy towards the truly penitent, and with the moſt awful denunciations of his juſt diſpleaſure againſt obſtinate preſumptuous tranſgreſſors. And the important leſſon which runs through the whole is this, that we are to make the pleaſing and ſerving God the chief buſineſs of our lives, and that our happineſs conſiſteth in his favour, which is only to be obtained in the uniform practice of piety and virtue.

Such evidently is the nature and tendency of the ſacred writings of the Old Teſtament. But very different is the repreſentation made of them by Lord Bolingbroke. Not content with endeavouring to deſtroy the credit of the hiſtory, he hath, by arguments drawn from the nature of the revelation itſelf contained in the Jewiſh Scriptures, uſed his utmoſt efforts to ſhew, that it is abſolutely unworthy of God: That "there are marks of an human original in thoſe books, which point out plainly the fraud "and the impoſture*:" And that "it is no leſs than blaſphemy "to aſſert them to be divinely inſpired†."

The objections he has advanced againſt the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament, and eſpecially againſt the Moſaic writings, are principally theſe that follow:

1. That they give the moſt unworthy ideas of the Supreme Being: they degrade him to the meaneſt offices and employments, and attribute to him human paſſions, and even the worſt of human imperfections.

2. Some of the laws there given are abſolutely contrary to the law of nature, which is the law of God, and therefore cannot be of divine original. He inſtanceth particularly in the command

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 288. † Ibid. p. 299.

for

for extirpating the Canaanites, and for puniſhing idolaters with death.

3. The firſt principle of the law of Moſes is inſociability; and it took the Jews out of all moral obligations to the reſt of mankind.

4. There are ſeveral paſſages in the Moſaic writings, which are falſe, abſurd, and unphiloſophical: as particularly the account there given of the creation of the world, and the fall of man.

5. The ſanctions of the law of Moſes were wholly of a temporal nature, and were contrived and fitted to humour and gratify the appetites and paſſions; without any regard to a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments.

Theſe are the principal objections urged by Lord Bolingbroke againſt the divine authority of the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament, and particularly of the books of Moſes. There are ſome other ſmaller exceptions, which I ſhall take notice of as they come in my way.

1. The firſt claſs of objections relateth to the mean and unworthy repreſentations that are made to us in Scripture of the Supreme Being. It hath always been accounted one of the diſtinguiſhing excellencies of the ſacred writings, that they abound with the moſt juſt and ſublime deſcriptions of the Deity, which have a manifeſt tendency to raiſe our minds to the moſt worthy and exalted conceptions of his divine majeſty, and his incomparable excellencies and perfections. Our author himſelf thinks fit to acknowledge, that "there are many paſſages in Scripture, "which give moſt ſublime ideas of the majeſty of the Supreme "Being:" And that "the conceptions which the Jews enter-"tained of the Supreme Being were very orthodox in the eye "of reaſon; and their pſalmiſts, and their prophets, ſtrained "their imaginations to expreſs the moſt elevated ſentiments of "God, and of his works, and of the methods of his providence*." If therefore there be any paſſages which, literally taken, ſeem to be unworthy of God, they ought, by all the rules of candour and fair criticiſm, to be interpreted in a conſiſtency with theſe; ſince it cannot be reaſonably ſuppoſed, that thoſe who entertained ſuch noble and ſublime ſentiments of the Divinity, ſhould

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 99. vol. iv. p. 463.

at the ſame time, as he would perſuade us they did, form the meaneſt and unworthieſt conceptions of him.

But let us conſider the particulars of his charge; and it amounts in effect to this: That the ſcriptures degrade the Supreme Being, by repreſenting him as deſcending to the meaneſt offices and employments: and that they attribute to him human paſſions, and even the worſt of human imperfections.

As to the firſt part of the charge, the degrading the Divine Majeſty to the meaneſt, the unworthieſt, offices and employments, he obſerves, that, according to the Moſaic account, "the Supreme "Being condeſcended to be the tutelary God of Abraham, Iſaac, "and Jacob, and under this character he acted a part which a ſen- "ſible heathen, not tranſported by preſumptuous notions of his "own importance, nor by the impudence of enthuſiaſm, would "have thought too mean and too low for any of his inferior gods "or demons *." This objection he frequently repeats in various forms. He introduces one of the heathen ſages as alleging, that "among the Moſaic ſuperſtitions there was one, which could be "charged neither on the Egyptians, nor any other heathen nation, "and which ſurpaſſed the moſt extravagant of theirs; and this "was, that the Supreme Being is repreſented as having taken "upon him a name, which was a very magnificent one indeed, "and ſuch as might denote the Supreme Being, but ſtill a name "by which he might be diſtinguiſhed as the tutelar God of one "family firſt, and then of one nation particularly, and almoſt "excluſively of all others †." But there is no paſſage where he puſhes this objection more ſtrongly, than in p. 463 of vol. iv. where he obſerves, that "the eternal and infinite Being is repre- "ſented in the Jewiſh hiſtories, and in the whole ſyſtem of their "religion, as a local tutelar deity, carried about in a trunk, or "reſiding in a temple; as an ally, who had entered into covenant "with their fathers; as a king, who had actually held the reins "of their government; and as an induſtrious magiſtrate, who "deſcended into all the particulars of religious and civil admi- "niſtration, even into the moſt minute and meaneſt. Thus were "the Jews accuſtomed to familiarize themſelves with the Su- "preme Being, and to imagine that he familiarized with them,

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 304. † Ibid. vol. iv. p. 34.

"and

" and to figure him to themſelves receiving their ſacrifices, and " liſtening to their prayers, ſometimes at leaſt, as groſsly as Lu- " cian repreſents Jupiter." He ſeems to think the heathens were in the right, when they blamed the Jews for " bringing the firſt " and only God too near to man, and making him an actor im- " mediately, and perſonally as it were, in the creation and govern- " ment of the world *." And he had before obſerved, that, according to the ſcripture, " the correſpondence between God and " man was often immediate, and even intimate and familiar with " his elect, and with ſuch purified ſouls as were prepared for it. " And that the whole tenor of the ſacred writings repreſented the " Supreme Being in frequent conferences with his creatures: " God covenanting and making bargains with man, and man " with God: God holding the language of man, reaſoning, ar- " guing, expoſtulating, in a very human manner, animated by " human affections, and appealing to human knowledge †."

Before I enter on a particular diſcuſſion of what his Lordſhip hath here offered, it is proper to obſerve, that though, in a paſſage juſt now cited, the Jews ſeem to be blamed for bringing the Supreme Being *too near to man*, and ſuppoſing him to be *an actor immediately, and as it were perſonally, in the government of the world;* yet he elſewhere finds fault with the heathen philoſophers for excluding the Monad, or ſupreme unity, from the creation and government of the world, and *baniſhing him almoſt intirely from the ſyſtem of his works*, whereby he *became in ſome ſort a non-entity, an abſtract or notional being* ‡. And he cenſures them for " imaging a divine monarchy, on a human plan, " the adminiſtration of which was not carried on by the imme- " diate agency of God himſelf, but mediately, as in terreſtrial " monarchies, by that of inferior agents, according to the ranks " and provinces allotted them §." And to this notion he thinks a conſiderable " part of the heathen idolatry is to be aſcribed." It is hard to know what idea this writer would have us form of the divine government. On the one hand, he ſeems to think it a demeaning the majeſty of the Supreme Being to ſuppoſe him to *act immediately, and perſonally, as it were,* in the government of

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 463.
† Ibid. p. 155.
‡ Ibid. p. 466.
§ Ibid. p. 73.

the

the world: and on the other hand, he will not allow, that the divine adminiſtration is carried on *mediately* by the miniſtry of inferior agents. And if God does not govern the world, either by his own perſonal immediate agency, or by that of ſubordinate agents and inſtruments, it cannot eaſily be conceived in what ſenſe he can be ſaid to govern the world at all.

Indeed any one that impartially conſiders the ſeveral paſſages above mentioned, relating to the Jewiſh ſcriptures, and many others of the like kind, which occur in Lord Bolingbroke's writings, and compares them with the ſcheme which he himſelf hath advanced, and of which an account was given in the eighth letter, will be apt to think that the real original ground of his prejudices againſt the ſacred writings is this: That they every-where repreſent God as intereſting himſelf in the affairs of men: whereas he looks upon it to be unworthy of the divine majeſty to ſuppoſe that he now concerneth himſelf about them, or exerciſeth any care with reſpect to the individuals of the human race. And ſince he aſſerts, that "the moſt elevated of finite intelligent "beings are not a jot nearer to the Supreme Intelligence than the "loweſt*," he muſt, upon his ſcheme, think it as unbecoming the majeſty of God to exerciſe any ſpecial care towards the higheſt of angelical beings, or whatever inhabitants there may be in any part of this vaſt univerſe, as towards the individuals of mankind. This ſcheme is not only, as was ſhewn before, of a moſt pernicious tendency, and manifeſtly ſubverſive of all religion and the fear of God, but at the bottom argueth, notwithſtanding all its glorious pretences, very diſhonourable and unworthy conceptions of the Supreme Being. For either it ſuppoſeth him not to be preſent to the creatures he hath made, which is to deny the immenſity of his eſſence, or that, if he be preſent, he hath not a certain knowledge of them, and of their actions and affairs, and conſequently is not omniſcient: though our author himſelf ſays, "It may be demonſtrated, that the All-perfect Being muſt be "omniſcient, as well as ſelf-exiſtent†." Or that if he hath a perfect knowledge of the actions and affairs of his reaſonable creatures, yet he is abſolutely indifferent about them, whether they obey his laws or not; whether good or evil, virtue or vice, hap-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 183. † Ibid. vol. v. p. 36.

pineſs

pineſs or miſery, prevail in the moral world. This muſt be owned to be very well ſuited to the character of an Epicurean deity, whoſe happineſs conſiſteth in an eternal indolence, and who is ſuppoſed to be of a nice and delicate conſtitution, unable to bear the noiſe, the clamours, and confuſion, of this lower world, but is no way conſiſtent with the idea of the infinitely-perfect Being. How much nobler is the idea that is given us of the Deity in the holy ſcriptures! where he is repreſented as filling heaven and earth with his preſence, and exerciſing a conſtant inſpection over all his creatures, and all their actions, as diſpoſing and ordering all events, without diſtraction or confuſion, in ſuch a manner, as in the final iſſue of things to provide for the happineſs of thoſe that ſincerely obey him, and go on in the practice of righteouſneſs and virtue, and to manifeſt a juſt diſpleaſure againſt thoſe who obſtinately perſiſt in an impertinent courſe of vice and wickedneſs; and in a word, as governing the world, and all the orders of beings in it, with infinite wiſdom, righteouſneſs, and equity, and with the ſame almighty facility with which he created them! Such an idea of God is not only of the greateſt conſequence to the intereſts of religion and virtue in the world, but is infinitely more auguſt and noble in itſelf, and more conformable to the higheſt notions we can form of infinite perfection, than that which this writer would ſubſtitute in its ſtead.

I ſhall not add any thing here to what was offered in my eighth Letter, concerning a particular providence, as extending even to the individuals of the human race. If providence doth not interpoſe in human affairs at all, it cannot be expected that God ſhould at any time communicate extraordinary diſcoveries and revelations of his will to mankind. But if, as hath been ſhewn, providence doth concern itſelf even for individuals, and for promoting human happineſs, in a way conſiſtent with moral agency, it is very reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that it may pleaſe God to make diſcoveries and revelations of his will, for promoting the knowledge and practice of religion and virtue in the world, and that he may communicate ſuch diſcoveries to particular perſons, or to larger communities, in ſuch a way as may beſt anſwer the intentions of his wiſe and holy providence, of which he muſt be allowed to be the propereſt judge. And if he ſeeth fit to make ſuch revelations of his will, they muſt be communi-

cated

cated in ſuch a manner as is accommodated to human underſtandings, and fitted to work upon human affections: and therefore, if they be addreſſed to men in a way of *reaſoning*, *arguing*, and *expoſtulating*, it would be abſurd to make this an objection, as this writer ſeems to do, ſince there is nothing in this, but what is wiſely ſuited to the end we may ſuppoſe the Supreme Wiſdom and Goodneſs to have had in view in giving ſuch revelations.

He repreſents it as altogether unworthy of the Supreme Being to ſuppoſe him to enter into covenant with man: and in order to expoſe this, he is pleaſed to repreſent it under the mean idea of God's *making bargains with man, or man with God.* But if we conſider what is really intended by it, we ſhall find, that a covenant in this caſe is properly to be underſtood of a conditional promiſe, whereby bleſſings and benefits are promiſed on God's part, and duties required on ours: it is a law of God enjoining obedience, with a promiſe or promiſes annexed to it, by which God condeſcendeth to oblige himſelf to confer certain benefits upon his creatures, the ſubjects of his moral government, if they fulfil and obey the injunctions he hath laid upon them, and comply with the terms which he hath appointed. And conſidered in this view, it is ſo far from being a juſt objection againſt the ſacred writings, that it may be regarded as their great excellence, and what ſhould mightily recommend them to our eſteem, that God is there repreſented as dealing with man in a way of covenant; that is, in a way admirably ſuited to us as we are reaſonable creatures, moral agents. By this God doth not diveſt himſelf of his character and authority as our ſupreme univerſal Lord. He hath an undoubted right to give laws to his creatures, and lay what commands or injunctions upon them he ſeeth fit, in a way of abſolute ſovereignty, without bringing himſelf under any promiſes and engagements; but he condeſcendeth, in his marvellous wiſdom and goodneſs, to encourage and animate our obedience by expreſs promiſes and aſſurances of his grace and favour; and we on our parts bring ourſelves under the moſt ſolemn engagements, which bind us more ſtrictly to our duty, by our own expreſs conſent; than which no way of dealing with us can have a greater tendency to promote our comfort, and the intereſts of religion and virtue in the world.

As to the particular covenant made with Abraham, and God's engaging,

engaging, as he loves to expreſs it, to be a *tutelary God* to him; this put into other words ſignifies no more than this, that it pleaſed God to grant to this excellent perſon expreſs promiſes of his ſpecial grace and favour, upon condition of his faith and obedience; and particularly, that he promiſed to give the land of Canaan to his deſcendants; and that from him ſhould proceed that glorious perſon, who had been promiſed from the beginning, and who was actually to come into the world in the fulneſs of time, and in whom all the families of the earth were to be bleſſed. This covenant made with Abraham was not only proper, as it was a diſtinguiſhing mark of the divine favour and goodneſs to a perſon, who was an eminent example of piety and virtue, and the fame of whoſe excellent qualities is ſpread all over the eaſt, even to this day, but as it made a part of a glorious ſcheme which the divine wiſdom had in view, and which was to be accompliſhed in the fitteſt ſeaſon, and to be of extenſive benefit to mankind. So that this particular covenant was really intended in a ſubſerviency to the general good.

With regard to the covenant made with the people of Iſrael at Horeb, the deſign of it was to erect a ſacred polity, the fundamental article of which was the acknowledgment and adoration of the one true God, the Maker and Governor of the world, free from all idolatry and polytheiſm. This tranſaction was carried on with a majeſty and ſolemnity becoming the great Lord of the univerſe, and which tended to inſpire the profoundeſt veneration for him, and for the laws he was pleaſed to promulgate. And at the ſame time it was wiſely ordered, that the people ſhould bind themſelves by their own expreſs conſent, and ſolemn ſtipulation, to receive that conſtitution, and obey thoſe laws. The moral laws given to that people were excellent: the judicial laws juſt and equitable: the ceremonial laws were inſtituted for wiſe reaſons, ſome of which we are able to aſſign at this diſtance; and there is no doubt to be made, that if we were well acquainted with the circumſtances of that time and people, we ſhould be convinced of the great propriety of many of thoſe ceremonious injunctions, which now we are not able particularly to account for. Our author talks of the prieſt's *wearing a ridiculous cap and breaſt-plate, fringes, and bells*, and thinks it abſurd to ſuppoſe, that *ſuch trifles as theſe were the inſtitutions of divine wiſ-*

dom.

*dom**. But it was wiſely ordered under that conſtitution, that nothing relating to divine worſhip ſhould be left to their own invention. It was judged proper to give them rules deſcending even to minute particulars, and to confine them to thoſe rules, the more effectually to hinder them from deviating into endleſs ſuperſtitions. The particulars referred to, contributed to promote order and decency in the externals of religious ſervice; nor was there any thing in the Jewiſh inſtituted rites abſurd, indecent, ridiculous, or impure, as were many of the rites in uſe among the pagan nations.

As to God's being a tutelary Deity to the people of Iſrael, this, if ſtripped of the form of expreſſion which he has choſen in order to ridicule it, only ſignifies, that God was pleaſed to make ſpecial revelations and diſcoveries of his will to that people, and to give them holy and excellent laws, at the ſame time promiſing, if they obeyed thoſe laws, to grant them his ſpecial protection, to honour them with great privileges and advantages, and to make them happy in the effects of his grace and favour; and threatening, if they proved obſtinate and diſobedient, to inflict upon them awful puniſhments, the tokens of his righteous diſpleaſure. And that there is any thing in this unbecoming the wiſe and righteous Lord and Governor of the world, ſuppoſing him to concern himſelf in human affairs, this writer has not proved, except confident aſſertions muſt paſs for proofs. And as to his being the King of Iſrael, this is not be underſtood as if he did not ſtill continue to be the univerſal Sovereign and Lord of all mankind. He was never regarded as having diveſted himſelf of that character. Nowhere is his univerſal dominion and governing providence, as extending to all his creatures, and eſpecially to the whole human race, more ſtrongly aſſerted, or more nobly deſcribed, than in the Jewiſh Scriptures. But it pleaſed him, for wiſe purpoſes, to erect a peculiar conſtitution among the people of Iſrael, according to which he condeſcended to be, in a ſpecial ſenſe, their King and Sovereign. And what we are to underſtand by it is properly this: that he gave them laws at the firſt eſtabliſhment of their polity, which were to be the rule of their ſtate, and by which they were to be governed; and upon their obſervance of which

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 98.

the

the preſervation of their national privileges depended; and that he raiſed up judges and governors, who were to rule them in his name, and as by his authority, and to be the leaders and generals of their armies, for delivering them from their enemies and oppreſſors: and he was pleaſed alſo to give them direction in matters of great and public moment, by the oracle of Urim and Thummim, which was by his appointment eſtabliſhed among them for that purpoſe. There was nothing in all this but what was wiſely ſuited to the nature and deſign of that particular conſtitution, and tended to confirm and eſtabliſh that people in the belief and adoration of the one true God, and to exhibit a glorious ſenſible proof of his governing providence among them. But the theocracy was never deſigned to ſuperſede the office and authority of the ordinary magiſtrates, as this writer ſeems to inſinuate, by telling us, that under that conſtitution God "acted "as an induſtrious magiſtrate, who deſcended into all the par-"ticulars of religious and civil adminiſtration, even into the "moſt minute and meaneſt." For though the laws were originally given by God, the execution of thoſe laws was ordinarily veſted in the magiſtrates appointed for that purpoſe, and choſen by the people in their ſeveral tribes. So they were in the days of Moſes, and under the judges, when the people were more properly and immediately under the adminiſtration of the theocracy.

But it is farther urged, that God is repreſented in the Jewiſh Scriptures as a *local* Deity, *reſiding* and dwelling *in a temple*, or *carried about by the Levites in a wooden cheſt or trunk*. The author ſeems fond of this obſervation, for he has it over three or four times on different occaſions. But by this reflection he has expoſed himſelf rather than the Jews. That people, inſtructed by their Scriptures, had nobler notions of the Deity than to be capable of imagining, that the Lord of the univerſe, who, they were taught to believe, made and governeth the world, and filleth heaven and earth, was ſhut up and confined in a wooden cheſt. It is true, that the more effectually to preſerve that people from idolatry, and to impreſs and affect their minds with a lively ſenſe of God's ſpecial preſence among them, there was one ſacred place appointed, the tabernacle firſt, and the temple afterwards, which was peculiarly dedicated to his ſolemn worſhip and ſervice. There their moſt ſolemn acts of devotion were to be performed:

formed: and there was the ark or ſacred cheſt he ſpeaks of, in which were depoſited the tables of the original covenant between God and them: there alſo was a cloud of glory, the majeſtic ſymbol of God's immediate preſence. It cannot be reaſonably denied, that God may, if he thinks fit, give illuſtrious exhibitions of his divine preſence and majeſty by a viſible external glory and ſplendour, in certain places, or on certain occaſions. But it doth not follow, that he is therefore a limited Being, or that his eſſence is circumſcribed, or confined to that particular place, where it pleaſeth him thus peculiarly to manifeſt his ſpecial preſence. How far the Iſraelites were from forming ſuch mean notions of the Divinity as this writer is pleaſed to inſinuate, we have an authentic proof in the admirable prayer offered up by Solomon at the dedication of the temple, in the name and preſence of all the people; in which he addreſſeth himſelf to God in that noble manner: *But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee! how much leſs this houſe which I have builded!* 1 Kings viii. 27. See alſo Iſa. lxvi. 1.

It has often given me great pleaſure to reflect upon what every one that impartially conſiders the ſcriptures of the Old Teſtament muſt be ſenſible of, that the Jews, if they governed themſelves by their ſacred writings, were inſtructed, in their ideas of God, to unite the moſt incomprehenſible greatneſs and majeſty, and the moſt marvellous grace and condeſcenſion: to regard him as filling heaven and earth with the immenſity of his preſence, and yet as vouchſafing to grant viſible tokens and ſymbols of his ſpecial preſence among them by his ark and temple: as humbling himſelf even in beholding the things that are done in heaven, and yet as regarding the things that are done in the earth. They acknowledged the glorious hoſts of angels as the attendants of the divine majeſty, the bleſſed miniſters of his power and wiſdom: but ſtill as infinitely inferior, and even *chargeable with folly* before him: and inſtead of erecting them into deities, and adoring them as the heathens did, they called upon them to join with them in worſhipping and adoring the ſupreme univerſal Lord. They were ready to cry out, with a devout admiration in the contemplation of God's unequalled dignity and glory, *Who in the heavens can be compared unto the Lord? What is man, that thou*

thou art mindful of him? But they did not under this pretence repreſent him as taking no notice of men, or their concernments. They conſidered him as infinitely raiſed above the higheſt of his creatures; yet not neglecting or deſpiſing the meaneſt: That *his name is exalted above all bleſſing and praiſe*, and yet he hath a gracious regard to our prayers and praiſes, if offered up from ſincere and upright hearts. Thus they were taught in Scripture to celebrate and adore his matchleſs grace and condeſcending goodneſs, without impairing the ſplendour and glory of his infinite majeſty. And accordingly, in the patterns of devotion that are ſet before us in Scripture, we may obſerve the moſt adoring thoughts, the moſt ſublime conceptions, of God's unſearchable greatneſs, and ſupreme dominion, and ſpotleſs purity; and the moſt humbling ſenſe of human weakneſs, guilt, and unworthineſs, mixed with an ingenuous confidence in his infinite grace and ſovereign mercy.

Thus I have conſidered pretty largely that part of the objection, which chargeth the Scriptures with degrading the Deity to mean and unworthy offices and employments, and ſhall now take ſome notice of the other part of the charge, *viz.* that the Scriptures aſcribe to him bodily parts, and human paſſions and affections, and even thoſe of the worſt kind.

With reſpect to the former, he obſerveth, that the Jewiſh Scriptures aſcribe to God "not only corporeal appearances, but "corporeal action, and all the inſtruments of it, eyes, ears, "mouth, hands, and feet.—And that they are apt in many places "to make thoſe who read them repreſent the Supreme Being to "themſelves like an old man looking out of the clouds*." He ſays, "the literal ſignification of ſuch expreſſions is abomina-"ble." And he ridicules thoſe who throw what he calls *a flimſy allegorical veil* over them, as having *ſtolen it from the wardrobe of Epicurus*. But the ridicule lights upon himſelf, who I believe was the firſt man that would have thought of having recourſe to Epicurus to interpret the ſenſe of Moſes. There needs no more than common attention, and a comparing the Scripture with itſelf, to be convinced that it is incapable of the abſurd repreſentation he would put upon thoſe paſſages. He

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 520.

obſerves indeed, that " images taken from corporeal ſubſtance, " from corporeal action, and from the inſtruments of it, cannot " give us notions in any degree proper, of God's manner of be- " ing, nor of that divine inconceivable energy in which the ac- " tion of God conſiſts." Nor are thoſe expreſſions of hands, feet, eyes, and ears, when aſcribed to God in ſcripture, deſigned to ſignify either the manner of his being, or of his divine energy, concerning which there are many noble expreſſions in the ſacred writings, which have an admirable ſublimity in them; but by an eaſy metaphor, underſtood by all the world, hands ſignify power, eyes and ears ſignify knowledge. And whereas he adds, that " they cannot exalt, they muſt debaſe our conceptions, and " accuſtom the mind inſenſibly to confound divine with human " ideas and notions, God with man:" the anſwer is obvious: That ſufficient care is taken in the holy ſcriptures to prevent this, by furniſhing us with the moſt ſublime ideas of the Divinity that can poſſibly enter into the human mind. God's incomprehenſible majeſty, his immenſe greatneſs, his almighty power, the infiniteneſs of his underſtanding, his omnipreſence, are frequently repreſented and deſcribed in ſo admirable a manner, as ſhews, with the laſt degree of evidence, that the expreſſions which ſeem to aſcribe bodily parts and members to him cannot be underſtood in a groſs literal ſenſe. Our author himſelf, aſcribing motives to God, obſerves, that " we muſt ſpeak of God after the manner " of men *." And indeed we muſt either not ſpeak of God at all, or we muſt ſpeak of him in ways of expreſſion, originally derived from ſomething relating to our own bodies or minds. This writer elſewhere inſinuates, that we reſemble God no more in our ſouls than we do in our bodies; and that to ſay his intellect is like ours, is as bad as the anthropomorphites †. So that, according to him, expreſſions drawn from the faculties of the ſoul, are as improper as thoſe drawn from the members of the body. Thus, under pretence of a profound veneration for the Deity, we muſt not ſpeak of God at all, as ſome of the ancient philoſophers thought it unlawful to name him, or to worſhip him, except in ſilence. Yea, we muſt not ſo much as think of him; for our ideas of God fall, no doubt, infinitely ſhort of his

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 468. † Ibid. p. 35.

real

real majeſty and glory, as well as our expreſſions. But it may be obſerved, that this forward cenſurer falls into that way of talking himſelf which he finds fault with in the holy ſcriptures. He repreſents God as *ſpeaking to men* by the law of nature: he calls it the *voice of God*, and the *word of God*. He ſpeaks of the *hands of God**, and of his *ſeeing* all things. And though he repreſents the aſcribing ideas to God as no leſs improper, and even profane, than the aſcribing hands and feet to him, yet on ſeveral occaſions he talks of the *divine ideas*.

But he farther urges, that the ſcriptures attribute to God human affections and paſſions, and even thoſe of the worſt kind: that "they impute ſuch things to the Divinity as would be a diſgrace "to humanity†:" That "the Jewiſh ſyſtem contained ſuch "inſtances of partiality in love and hatred, of furious anger, and "unrelenting vengeance, in a long ſeries of arbitrary judgments, "as no people on earth but this would have aſcribed, I do not "ſay to God, but to the worſt of thoſe monſters, who are ſuf-"fered or ſent by God, for a ſhort time, to puniſh the iniquities "of men‡." To the ſame purpoſe he afterwards obſerves, that according to the repreſentations made in ſcripture, God "loves "with partiality, his mercy is arbitrary, and depends on mere "will—And towards mankind his anger is often furious, his "hatred inveterate, his vengeance unrelenting: but when the "wicked repent of their ſins, he repents ſometimes of his ſeve-"rity." And then he aſks, "What a deſcription is this of the "All-perfect Being?" But this deſcription is his own, and is founded on a groſs miſrepreſentation of the true intention and deſign of the ſacred writings. As to loving with partiality, if by that be meant his favouring and diſtinguiſhing ſome with greater privileges and advantages, and giving them more valuable means of improvement than others; nothing can be more evident, than that this has been often and ſtill is done in the courſe of his providence. Nor is this any more to be found fault with, than his making different ſpecies of beings, ſome vaſtly tranſcending others in their faculties, and capacities for happineſs. He is the abſolute Lord and diſpenſer of his own gifts, and his goodneſs is that of a free and ſovereign Benefactor; and

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 395. † Ibid. vol. iii. p. 299.
‡ Ibid. vol. v. p. 515.

it would be the height of abſurdity and profaneneſs to pretend to tie him down to give to all men preciſely the ſame capacities, the ſame advantages and opportunities, and to limit him ſo, that he ſhall not diſpenſe his gifts in ſuch meaſures and proportions as he thinks fit, nor ſhall have it in his power to do any thing for any one perſon or people, but what he does preciſely for every perſon and for all people. But if by *partiality* be meant partiality in judgment, and in the diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments, it is very unjuſt to charge the holy ſcriptures as attributing ſuch partiality to the Supreme Being. There is nothing more ſtrongly and expreſsly aſſerted there, than that God *accepteth not the perſons of men*, and that he *judgeth without reſpect of perſons*. It is evident, not merely from a ſingle paſſage, but from the whole tenor of the ſacred writings, that the righteous Lord loveth righteouſneſs: that he extendeth his favour to all thoſe of the human race, of whatever family or nation, who ſincerely love and obey him, and go on in a courſe of real piety and virtue: that ſuch perſons alone can hope for an intereſt in his favour, and to obtain the divine acceptance and approbation: and that all wicked and preſumptuous ſinners, of whatſoever nation or profeſſion, ſhall be expoſed to his juſt diſpleaſure. Nor are there any ſuch things aſcribed to God in ſcripture as *arbitrary judgments*. And whereas this author charges it as unworthy of God to repreſent him as *repenting of his ſeverity* when the wicked repent of their ſins; the thing really intended by this muſt be acknowledged to be agreeable to the beſt ideas we can form of his governing wiſdom, righteouſneſs, and goodneſs: for it only ſignifies, that when ſinners forſake their evil ways, God is graciouſly pleaſed to change the methods of his dealings towards them, and is willing to receive them to his grace and favour. But in reality there is no change in the divine purpoſes or counſels. The change that is wrought is in the mind and temper of the ſinner: God acts uniformly according to the ſtated rules of his adminiſtrations; and nothing has happened but what he perfectly foreknew *. But repenting, in a ſtrict and proper ſenſe,

* His Lordſhip ſeems to think it an unanſwerable objection againſt the Moſaic writings, that in the account there given of the flood, God is repreſented as having "repented that he made man."

But

ſenſe, as it is a mark of human imperfection and mutability, is expreſsly denied of God in the holy ſcripture; where we are aſſured, that God *is not as the ſon of man that he ſhould repent.*

As to the expreſſions of anger, wrath, fury, hatred, vengeance, as aſcribed to God in the ſacred writings, it is a thing ſo obvious that it can ſcarce be miſtaken, that theſe are only ſtrong expreſſions, deſigned to impreſs the hearts of men with a more lively ſenſe of God's righteous diſpleaſure againſt ſin and wickedneſs, and reſolution to puniſh it; which it is of the higheſt importance to mankind to conſider and believe. Any one that allows himſelf to think impartially, muſt be ſenſible, that ſuch ways of repreſenting things are abſolutely neceſſary in a revelation deſigned for common uſe; and that it is far more for the good of the world in general, and for promoting the intereſts of virtue, and reſtraining vice and wickedneſs, that men ſhould conceive of God as loving and taking pleaſure in the good and righteous, and as full of juſt reſentment againſt evil-doers, than as utterly unconcerned about the actions and affairs of men, or alike affected towards the righteous and the wicked. Yea, the former notions are not only more uſeful, and of better influence, but more juſt and rational in themſelves, and more worthy of the

But it is manifeſt, that this is only an emphatical way of expreſſion, to ſignify God's juſt diſpleaſure at the great and univerſal wickedneſs of mankind, and at their having ſo far fallen from the noble end of their creation; and that therefore, after having tried the methods of indulgence towards them, he ſaw fit to ſend a deſtructive deluge for exterminating that incorrigible race. And it is plain, that according to the doctrine of the ſacred writings, which every-where repreſent God as foreknowing the actions of men, this corruption of mankind was what he foreſaw from the beginning; and the puniſhing them in this manner made a part of the original ſcheme of divine providence, though it did not actually take effect till the proper time came for executing it. As to what he mentions in a ſneering way, concerning God's *ſmelling the ſweet ſavour of Noah's burnt-offering*, it is ſufficient to obſerve, that the deſign of the expreſſion is plain and eaſily intelligible, viz. to ſignify God's gracious acceptance of the act of devotion performed by that good man, to acknowledge his gratitude, and implore the divine mercy; and that on that occaſion God was pleaſed, after having made ſo ſignal a diſplay of his juſtice, to allay and diſſipate the fears which might be apt to ariſe in the hearts of men, and to aſſure them of his merciful intentions towards them, and that he would not any more ſend an univerſal deluge upon the earth; of which the rainbow in the clouds ſhould be a conſtant memorial.

All-perfect Being. For what idea is this of God, to repreſent him as neither delighting in order and virtue, nor diſpleaſed with vice and wickedneſs, but ſolacing himſelf in an eternal indolence, and no-way concerned about the good or ill behaviour, the happineſs or miſery of his reaſonable creatures! A God deſtitute of all affections, or of any thing correſpondent to them, would not be the moſt perfect Being. There are ſpiritual affections, which have nothing to do with body, and which as properly belong to ſpirits or minds, as intellect or will; and I can as eaſily ſuppoſe them deſtitute of the latter as of the former. Our affections indeed have uſually a great mixture of bodily paſſions, and conſequently of imperfection: but there are affections of a nobler kind, and which we may conceive in pure ſpirits; yea, they cannot be conceived without them: nor can we avoid aſcribing ſome affections, or what is analagous or equivalent to them, to God, provided we remove from them all thoſe imperfections and defects with which they are attended in us. A love of order, goodneſs, purity, virtue, and a juſt deteſtation of moral evil, is abſolutely inſeparable from the idea of the Infinitely-perfect Being, the moſt wiſe and righteous Governor of the world.

I ſhall conclude my obſervations on this part of Lord Bolingbroke's book with a paſſage from an author whom no man will ſuppoſe to have been prejudiced in favour of the Scriptures: it is Mr. Anthony Collins, in *an Eſſay*, which he publiſhed in 1707, *concerning the Uſe of Reaſon in Propoſitions, the Evidence whereof depends upon Human Teſtimony*. After having obſerved, that "one uſe of reaſon in things which by the teſtimony of men are "ſuppoſed to come from God, is to endeavour to find out ſuch "a ſenſe of a ſuppoſed divine revelation as is agreeable to the "diſcoveries of our reaſon, if the words under any kind of con"ſtruction will bear it, though at firſt view they may ſeem re"pugnant to reaſon, and to one another;" he adds, "this is "certainly a great piece of juſtice, and what is due to words "that upon the leaſt evidence can be ſuppoſed to come from "God, eſpecially ſince expreſſions that do literally quadrate "with the maxims of reaſon and philoſophy, are neceſſary to "make a revelation have any effect upon common people's minds. "For was not God to be repreſented by expreſſions, which, li-

"terally

" terally underſtood, attribute to him human paſſions and actions, " they who by their occupations in the world are incapable of " thoſe more juſt ideas which men of thought know to belong to " that Being, would perhaps think him incapable of taking cog- " nizance of their actions: and therefore to make a revelation " *uſeful* and *credible in itſelf*, it muſt conſiſt of words whoſe " *literal* meaning is falſe, but whoſe *real* meaning is conſiſtent " with the juſteſt notions of reaſon and philoſophy. And there- " fore we ought to examine whether the words under any con- " ſtruction will bear a reaſonable ſenſe," p. 17, 18. Mr. Collins then applies this obſervation to the revelation which we acknowledge, and conſiders thoſe paſſages of ſcripture where God is ſaid to *reſt*, *repent*, *be angry*, *&c.* It muſt be owned, that this gentleman judges much more reaſonably and equitably in this matter than Lord Bolingbroke has done.

This may ſuffice at preſent. In my next I ſhall conſider the other objections which his Lordſhip hath urged againſt the divine authority of the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament, eſpecially of the Moſaic writings.

LETTER XXX.

Farther Objections againſt the Moſaic Writings and the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament conſidered—The Laws of Moſes not contrary to the Law of Nature—This particularly ſhewn with regard to the Command for exterminating the Canaanites, and the Law for puniſhing thoſe among the Iſraelites that ſhould revolt to Idolatry with Death—The Law of Moſes not accountable for the Fury of the Zealots—The Inſtances of Phineas and Mattathias conſidered—Inſociability not the firſt Principle of the Law of Moſes, nor did that Law take the Jews out of all Moral Obligations to the reſt of Mankind—There is nothing falſe or abſurd in the Moſaical Account of the Creation of the World and the Fall of Man—Concerning the Sanctions of the Law of Moſes—The not making expreſs Mention of future Rewards and Puniſhments in that Law, no Argument againſt its divine Original—Some other Objections againſt the Scriptures obviated.

SIR,

I NOW proceed to another ſet of objections, which are deſigned to ſhew that ſome of the laws of Moſes are abſolutely contrary to the law of nature, which is the law of God, and therefore cannot come from him. He inſtances particularly in the command for exterminating the Canaanites, and the law for puniſhing idolaters among the Iſraelites with death. "In both "which," he ſays, "it is ſuppoſed impiouſly, againſt principles "as ſelf-evident as any of thoſe neceſſary truths which are ſuch "of all knowledge, that the Supreme Being commands by one "law what he forbids by another*;" and that "he approved "and commanded on particular occaſions the moſt abominable "violations of the general laws of nature†." I ſhall conſider what he has offered with regard to each of theſe.

As to the command for exterminating the Canaanites, it is what he frequently inveighs againſt, as the greateſt piece of in-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 180. † Ibid. p. 181.

juſtice

juſtice and cruelty that ever was committed*. And he has pronounced, that "the men who juſtify ſuch cruelties upon any "hypotheſis whatſoever, muſt have very ill hearts as well as "heads:" And that "he who imputes them to the Supreme "Being is worſe than an atheiſt, though he paſs for a ſaint†." I ſhall venture however to examine what this rigid cenſurer has offered on this ſubject.

He firſt layeth it down as a principle, that "God cannot com-"mand in particular what he forbids in general. He who has "made benevolence to all rational beings the fundamental law "of our nature, can never command ſome to rob or to murder "others; to uſurp on the rights of their fellow-creatures, and "to exterminate whole nations‡." The force of his argument here lies wholly in the words *rob* and *murder*, both which carry the idea of depriving others of their lives and properties, without a juſt cauſe, and without lawful authority. But though God has forbidden us, both in the law of nature and in the decalogue, to murder, he can command ſome to put others to death for juſt cauſes, in which caſe it is not murder. He never, by giving this law to mankind, diveſted himſelf of the dominion he hath over the lives of his creatures. He can alſo commiſſion, for wiſe ends, ſome to deprive others of their properties. For the law of nature is always to be underſtood with this limitation, except in caſes where God himſelf ſhall otherwiſe appoint. It is no principle of that law, that God can never without injuſtice exterminate nations. That he can do it in a way of immediate judgment, by ſending deſtructive calamities, famines, peſtilences, earthquakes, deluges, and the like, cannot be denied by any theiſt who believes a providence governing mankind, and interpoſing in the affairs of men. And if he can do it immediately himſelf, he can commiſſion men to do it, provided he gives ſufficient credentials of that commiſſion: and ſuch the Iſraelites had, according to the accounts given in the books of Moſes. And in judging of the caſe, how far it is juſtifiable, we muſt take it in all its circumſtances as there repreſented. Our author himſelf ſuppoſes the miracles done among them, if really done, to be

* See particularly vol. iii. p. 305. vol. v. p. 99. 146.

† Vol. iii. p. 306. ‡ Vol. v. p. 99.

ſufficient

ſufficient to convince all mankind, not only at that time, but in all ſucceeding generations to the end of the world, of the divine authority of that law and conſtitution; and therefore ſufficient to convince the people of Iſrael. All therefore that remained was, that they ſhould be ſatisfied of the truth of the facts, and of this they could not doubt, as they were done before their eyes. And the ſame books which give an account of the facts, give an account of the divine commiſſion to the Iſraelites, and the reaſons and ends of it. And whereas it is urged, that "the "Canaanites were obnoxious to the divine vengeance in no other "reſpect than that which was common to them with all the hea-"then nations, *viz.* their idolatry*," this is not true according to the account given by Moſes, Lev. xviii. 24, 25. 27. whereby it appears, that it was not merely for their idolatry, but for their monſtrous vices and wickedneſs of all kinds, that they were ordered to be exterminated; and that never was there upon earth a more profligate and abandoned race of men. And ſuppoſing this to be true, and that God had determined to ſignalize his righteous vengeance againſt them in the ſevereſt manner, he might, without any pretence for arraigning the juſtice of his proceedings, have conſumed them by fire from heaven, as he did part of them at Sodom and Gomorrah, or have overwhelmed them with an inundation, or have ſwallowed them up by an earthquake, and thereby utterly deſtroyed that people, their little ones as well as the adult. Nor could it have been ſaid in ſuch a caſe, that this was contrary to the law of nature. But then it would not have been ſo apparent, that this calamity was inflicted in a way of puniſhment for their idolatry and deteſtable wickedneſs. It might have been poſſibly attributed to ſome natural cauſe, or have been regarded as an unaccountable and fortuitous event: but when they were ordered to be exterminated for their abominable crimes by an expreſs command of God, atteſted by a ſeries of the moſt amazing miracles and divine interpoſitions, and this appointed to be executed by another nation, who were peculiarly ſet apart by their original conſtitution to the acknowledgment and adoration of the one true God, and of him only, and to whom God had given the moſt holy and excellent laws;

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 184.

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at the ſame time threatening them with the like puniſhments if they committed the like crimes: in this caſe the reaſon of the judgment was as apparent, as when a malefactor is put to death by an officer of juſtice for a crime, in execution of the ſentence of a juſt magiſtrate. Nor is there any thing in ſuch a procedure that can be proved to be inconſiſtent with the wiſdom and righteouſneſs of the Supreme Being, or contradictory to his own laws; ſince there is no law of nature that debars God from executing judgments on particular perſons, or guilty nations, for their crimes and vices, even to extermination, or from employing, if he thinks fit, one or more nations to execute his judgments upon others. Nor has this confident and aſſuming writer brought any proof that it is ſo. As to his comparing the invaſion of Canaan by the Iſraelites, and what they did there, to the cruelties exerciſed by the Spaniards in America*, and to the ravages of the Huns under Attila, who, he ſays, were much more merciful than they†, there is this vaſt difference between the caſes, that the latter had no motive or pretence, but their own ambition, avarice, and cruelty, whereas the former did it in execution of the expreſs command of God, and by a commiſſion from him, the truth of which was confirmed by a ſeries of the moſt extraordinary divine atteſtations that ever the world ſaw. This therefore can be no precedent to any other nation to do the like, except they can produce the ſame or equal proofs of a divine commiſſion; which no other ſince have been able to do, and probably never will. This may ſuffice with regard to the command for the extermination of the Canaanites: which I have elſewhere conſidered more largely. See *Anſwer to Chriſtianity as old as the Creation*, vol. ii. p. 429. 437.; and the *Anſwer to Morgan*, vol. ii. p. 97, *et ſeq.*

The other command produced by this author to prove that the law of Moſes is contrary to the law of nature, and therefore cannot be of divine original, is the law for putting a falſe prophet to death that ſhould attempt to ſeduce the people to idolatry, and for the inflicting a capital puniſhment upon any particular perſon among the Iſraelites that ſhould revolt to idolatry, and even deſtroying a city that ſhould do ſo. Concerning this he very

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 305. † Ibid. vol. v. p. 148.

dogmatically

dogmatically pronounces—"I ſay, that the law of nature is the "law of God. Of this I have the ſame demonſtrative know-"ledge that I have of the exiſtence of God, the all-perfect Being. "I ſay, that the all-perfect Being cannot contradict himſelf: "that he would contradict himſelf, if the laws contained in the "thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy were his laws, ſince they "contradict thoſe of nature: and therefore that they are not his "laws. Of all this I have as certain, as intuitive a knowledge, "as I have that two and two are equal to four, or that the whole "is bigger than a part*." A very ſhort and deciſive determination of the controverſy! but we are by this time too well acquainted with his Lordſhip's manner, to lay any great ſtreſs on his poſitive aſſertions, though delivered with the moſt aſſuming air,

The argument he makes uſe of here is the ſame that he had uſed before, *viz.* that the law of nature forbids murder. This will be eaſily allowed. But it is not inconſiſtent with that law which forbids murder, to put perſons to death who are guilty of crimes that by the fundamental laws of the community deſerve death. If God ſhould have enacted a general law obligatory on all mankind, that whoſoever ſhould commit idolatry, or worſhip any other god, ſhould be put to death, as well as that any man that ſhould ſhed the blood of another without cauſe ſhould be put to death; this author might be challenged with all his confidence to prove, that ſuch a divine law would be contradictory to the law of nature. Idolatry, by his own acknowledgment, is forbidden in the law of nature, and is a breach of the firſt and great article of that law; and he repreſents is as *one of the greateſt of crimes* †. But God has not thought fit to enact a general law obligatory on all mankind for puniſhing idolaters with death, and without his appointment it ought not to be executed. But when it pleaſed him for wiſe ends to ſelect a particular nation, and among them to erect a peculiar ſacred polity, and to appoint that the adoration of the one true God, and of him only, ſhould be the very baſis of their conſtitution, on which all their privileges, their national properties, and their right to their country, depended, it is evident that under ſuch a conſtitution to revolt to idolatry and poly-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 191. † Ibid. p. 195.

theiſm,

theiſm, was in the moſt criminal ſenſe to be traitors to the community; and to arraign a law for inflicting a capital puniſhment upon idolaters under that particular conſtitution is highly abſurd. Nor could any thing be more juſt in ſuch a caſe, than to order that a falſe prophet, who ſhould endeavour to ſeduce the people to idolatry, ſhould be put to death: though this writer objects againſt it as unjuſt, for this ſtrange reaſon, that "miracles "were daily and almoſt hourly wrought in the ſight of all Iſrael*." This is abſolutely falſe, if underſtood of miracles ſtrictly ſo called; or if it were true, it is an odd thing to urge, that which made the crime of the falſe prophet the greater, to be a reaſon for exempting him from puniſhment.

But what he chiefly finds fault with, is the law for deſtroying any Iſraelitiſh city, that ſhould fall off to the worſhip of idols, Deut. xiii. 13, 14, 15, 16. He urges, that "the innocent were "to be involved in the ſame puniſhment with the guilty; neither "man, nor woman, nor beaſt, neither the brother, the daughter, "the wife nor the friend, was to be ſpared: and that the whole "chapter is ſuch an edict as could not be imputed to Attila with-"out injuſtice."—And after exclaiming againſt the obſtinacy of thoſe that pretend to juſtify the law of Moſes in this inſtance, he obſerves, that "by that law the undiſtinguiſhing extermination "of collective bodies, and eſpecially for matters of opinion, is "allowed†." And afterwards, arguing againſt Mr. Locke, he adds, that "even ſuppoſing God to be their King, the objections "of injuſtice and cruelty in thoſe laws will remain in their full "force: and that to ſuppoſe him to have given theſe laws would "be to degrade the All-perfect Being to the character of an un-"juſt and cruel tyrant, who authorized and even commanded "his miniſters expreſsly, to puniſh without meaſure, without "diſcernment, and without forms of juſtice‡." And he inſinuates, that there are precepts in that chapter, "from which the "inquiſition copied the inſtructions ſhe gives to her familiars§." But this is a groſs miſrepreſentation. He himſelf elſewhere obſerves, that "the cruel principle of perſecution for opinions "was never known till Chriſtians introduced it into the world‖;"

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 183. † Ibid. p. 184.
‡ Ibid. p. 194. § Ibid. p. 183. ‖ Ibid. p. 313.

though

though contrary, as he owns, to the true ſpirit of the Goſpel. And it is manifeſt, that the puniſhments referred to, Deut. xiii. were not to be inflicted for matters of opinion but of practice, for open acts of idolatry, in ſubverſion of the fundamental conſtitution of their ſtate; and great care was to be taken, that the puniſhment ſhould not be executed without due inquiry, and full proof. They were to *inquire*, and *make ſearch*, and *aſk diligently*, ſo as to be aſſured that it was *truth*, and the *thing certain*. Great deliberation was to be uſed: and except the whole city was obſtinately addicted to idolatry, and determined to perſiſt in it, they were not to be exterminated. And conſidering the deſign and nature of that peculiar conſtitution, a decree or law, for exterminating a city among themſelves that ſhould revolt to the worſhip of falſe gods, ſeemed neceſſary, and was like the cutting off a corrupt or gangrened limb, which was requiſite to ſave the whole. If God had, at the original eſtabliſhment of that polity, declared that he himſelf would in an immediate way by peſtilence, or fire from heaven, or ſome other extraordinary judgment, exterminate or deſtroy any city among them that ſhould revolt to the worſhip of idols, it could not be pretended that this would have been unjuſt, though children as well as adult would be involved in it. But he choſe that the puniſhment ſhould be inflicted in a judicial way by the hands of the magiſtrates, and by the authority of the nation or whole community, purſuant to a law for that purpoſe. And the puniſhment was both ordered to be executed with great ſolemnity, and to be attended with circumſtances of peculiar ſeverity, ſo as to proceed to utter extermination, the more effectually to create a horror and deteſtation of the crime, and to ſhew that ſo wicked a race was to be entirely deſtroyed. To which it muſt be added, that this puniſhment was denounced in conſequence of the original contract or covenant between God and that people. By coming into that covenant for themſelves and their children, they voluntarily ſubjected themſelves and them to the ſevereſt penalties in caſe of a revolt. And conſidering the mighty advantages they had as a nation by the theocracy, and by their peculiar conſtitution, and the ſignal bleſſings that would have followed upon their obedience, it was a condition which could not be reaſonably objected againſt, ſince they might ſo eaſily avoid the threatened calamities, by obedience

to

to a law ſo juſt and agreeable to reaſon, as is that of the worſhip of the one true God, the Lord of the univerſe, and of him only.

And to have legally tolerated any among them, whether particular perſons or communities, that ſhould openly revolt to idolatry, would have been manifeſtly abſurd, and abſolutely ſubverſive of their whole polity.

This writer takes particular notice of "the right the zealots "aſſumed to aſſaſſinate any Jew that ſhould ſeem to them to vio- "late, by public and ſtrong appearances, the ſanctity of the Di- "vinity, of the temple, and of the nation:" and that "this pro- "duced ſuch ſcenes of horror among the Jews as no other nation "ever produced." It will be owned, that the zealots in the latter times of the Jewiſh ſtate carried this to an exceſs of madneſs and fury; but the law is not accountable for it. It is evident from the thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, which orders the puniſhment of thoſe that ſhould revolt to idolatry, that the whole was to be tranſacted in an orderly and legal way, with great deliberation, and by public authority. And the ſame thing is repeated, Deut. xvii. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. where it is ordained, that with regard to any particular perſon that had ſerved other gods, they ſhould, before they puniſhed him, *inquire* and *ſearch diligently*. And it is expreſsly appointed, that at *the mouth of two or three witneſſes* he ſhould be put to death, but that *at the mouth of one witneſs* he ſhould not be put to death. Nor does Lord Bolingbroke pretend to produce any law to authorize the madneſs of the zealots. He only mentions two inſtances, which, he thinks, countenanced it, *viz.* that of Phineas, and that of Mattathias. As to the former, he ſays, "Phineas murdered Zimri and Coſbi "in the act of fornication." But this was not a ſimple act of fornication. It was joined with avowed idolatry, and, as it was circumſtanced, was a moſt inſolent defiance of all law and authority, one of the moſt flagrant crimes, in open oppoſition to God and man, that could be committed. The perſon who inflicted the puniſhment was himſelf a chief magiſtrate, of high authority, and in a caſe which needed no proof, and admitted of no delay, when a plague from God was broke out among the people, on the account of that very crime which theſe perſons ſo impudently avowed: and it was alſo in conſequence of an order which Moſes had given by the command of God to the Judges of

of Iſrael, to ſlay thoſe that were joined to Baal Peor—Numbers xxv. 4, 5. So that Phineas had full legal authority for what he did. And therefore this was no warrant to thoſe who without any authority aſſaſſinated any man they thought fit, under pretence of his violating the law, of which they ſet up themſelves for judges. As to the inſtance of Mattathias, our author obſerves, that "in the fury of his holy zeal he ruſhed on the Jew that was "about to ſacrifice in obedience to the edict of Antiochus, and "on the officer appointed to take care of the execution of the "edict, and murdered them both*." That we may judge of this, it is to be conſidered, that never was there a greater tyrant than Antiochus. He had entirely ſubverted the whole Jewiſh conſtitution, aboliſhed the ancient laws, and maſſacred the people. If ever there was a juſt foundation for riſing up in defence of religion, law, and liberty, here was an occaſion that loudly called for it. In theſe circumſtances Mattathias, who was not a mere private perſon, but *a ruler, and a great and honourable man* in the city of Modin where he dwelt, ſlew a Jew, who was then openly committing a crime, for which by the fundamental laws of his country he ought to have ſuffered death, but at a time when no legal juſtice in the uſual forms could be had. He alſo killed the King's officer, who was then compelling the people to ſubvert the laws. This he deſigned as a ſignal to the inſurrection which he immediately began: an inſurrection fully juſtifiable, if ever any was ſo, and which was carried on with a noble ſpirit and fortitude, and with a ſucceſs that ended in the ſubverſion of the horrid tyranny, and the happy reſtoration of their liberties and laws. Such an action, ſo circumſtanced as that of Mattathias, if it had been performed by a Greek or Roman, in oppoſition to horrid barefaced tyranny and cruelty, and in vindication of the eſſential laws and liberties of his country, would have been highly celebrated, and tranſmitted to all ſucceeding ages as a moſt glorious act of heroiſm.

The only thing farther that I ſhall mention is, what he obſerves concerning "the maſſacre which the Levites made of "three thouſand men in one day, when they were commanded, "without any other form of proceeding, to take every man his

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 180.

"ſword,

"ſword, and to ſlay his neighbour*." This muſt be owned to be an extraordinary puniſhment, and the occaſion was extraordinary. The revolt of the people was the moſt inexcuſable, by this writer's own acknowledgment, that could be ſuppoſed. It happened when the law had been juſt promulgated with the moſt amazing ſolemnity, and the conſtitution eſtabliſhed, to which they had given their own conſent. The body of the people had thereby expoſed themſelves to deſtruction: and if they had been conſumed in an immediate way by a plague, or fire, or ſome extraordinary judgment from heaven, it was no more than they deſerved. It was neceſſary that ſo open, ſo public, ſo aggravated a revolt and inſurrection againſt the majeſty and authority of the ſupreme univerſal Lord, to whom they themſelves had ſo lately in the moſt ſolemn manner vowed ſubjection and obedience, ſhould be diſtinguiſhed with marks of great ſeverity. In caſes of crimes where great numbers have been concerned, it has ſometimes been thought juſt to decimate them, to make one in ten ſuffer the death they all deſerved. But here of above ſix hundred thouſand, three thouſand only ſuffered, not above the two hundredth part of the whole. The numbers that were concerned rendered the trying each of them in a formal proceſs, which is what he ſeems to require, impracticable. Nor was there any need of it. The fact was public and notorious: and the perſons that ſuffered were undoubtedly ſuch as were known to be moſt guilty, and to have been moſt active in promoting the defection and revolt. And the immediate puniſhment of theſe was the moſt ſpeedy way of quelling the inſurrection, and bringing the whole body to a ſenſe of their guilt and of their duty.

The third objection I propoſed to take notice of, as raiſed by this writer againſt the Moſaic œconomy, is this: That "the firſt "principles, and the whole tenor of the Jewiſh laws, took that "people out of all moral obligations to the reſt of mankind: "That they were taught to think themſelves a choſen race, diſ-"tinct from the reſt of mankind, and who were far from owing "to other men, what other men owed to them, and to one ano-"ther. This produced a legal injuſtice and cruelty in their "whole conduct, authorized by their law, and preſſed upon them

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 146.

" by their prieſts and prophets*." And he elſewhere obſerves, that " the firſt principle of their polity, eccleſiaſtical and civil, " was inſociability: and accordingly their manners were rendered " unſuitable to the common nature and genius of mankind†."

This is a heavy charge; but, if cloſely examined, this inſociability amounteth to no more than this: That they had not a community of religion and rites with the heathens, as the heathens had with one another, and which they could not have without abſolutely deſtroying and defeating the end of their moſt excellent conſtitution; that they were not to intermarry with idolaters, and were obliged to keep cloſe to the obſervation of their own peculiar laws and cuſtoms; ſeveral of which were deſigned to preſerve them as a diſtinct body from mixing and incorporating with other nations. And conſidering how different their conſtitution was from that which obtained in other countries; that all the world about them was immerſed in idolatry and polytheiſm, and that they themſelves were very apt to fall in with the idolatrous cuſtoms of the neighbouring nations, and to which mankind in all ages have been very prone: conſidering theſe things, if great care had not been taken to keep them diſtinct, by ſeveral peculiar rites and cuſtoms, and to hinder them from intermarrying with their idolatrous neighbours, they could not poſſibly have preſerved their conſtitution: they muſt have been ſoon mixed and confounded with other nations: the conſequence of which would have been, that they would have fallen into a conformity to their religion and worſhip, and have loſt their own. And ſo the whole deſign of that admirable polity, ſo well fitted to preſerve the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God, and of him only, in oppoſition to the univerſally-prevailing polytheiſm and idolatry, would have been defeated; and all nations would have been involved in the ſame common idolatry, and perhaps have continued in it to this day. For, according to the plan laid by the divine wiſdom, Judaiſm prepared the way for Chriſtianity: and all that is good in Mahometaniſm is derived from the one or the other of theſe. But though the people of Iſrael were obliged thus to keep themſelves diſtinct, and though none were regarded as ſtrictly and properly

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 290. See alſo ibid. p. 283.

† Ibid. vol. v. p. 148. See alſo ibid. p. 198.

incorporated

incorporated into their body who did not conform to the peculiar laws of their polity, they were not obliged to confine their benevolence to thoſe of their own nation. They were directed, by many expreſs precepts in their law, to ſhew great kindneſs to thoſe of other nations, to the ſtrangers that paſſed through their land, or that ſojourned among them: to exerciſe great humanity towards them, and ſerve them in all friendly offices. This is not only allowed, but ſtrongly preſſed upon them in their law, as any one will be convinced that impartially conſiders the paſſages referred to at the bottom of the page*. And the Jews themſelves obſerve, that the precepts preſcribing a kind conduct towards ſtrangers are inculcated one-and-twenty times in the law.

It is mere calumny and abuſe to ſay, that the Jews were authorized by their law, and preſſed by their prophets, to exerciſe cruelty and injuſtice towards the reſt of mankind; and that they were abſolved from all moral obligations, and from all rules of juſtice, equity, and fidelity with regard to them. Nor was there any thing in their law to oblige them to perſecute others for their opinions in religion, or to compel them to conform to their peculiar rites. On the contrary, they allowed thoſe of any other nation to dwell among them, and to worſhip at the temple, where there was a court provided for them who worſhipped the one true God, the maker and preſerver of all things, though they did not obſerve the rites which were peculiarly preſcribed to thoſe of their own body. And how happy would it have been, if the principles of toleration had been always carried thus far among thoſe of other profeſſions!

Their looking upon themſelves to be God's choſen people ought to have engaged them to great thankfulneſs to God for ſuch eminent advantages, and to have put them upon diſtinguiſhing themſelves by the pure practice of religion and every virtue, that they might walk worthy of their character and privileges: if they abuſed this to pride and inſolence, the fault was not in their law, but in themſelves. Mankind have been always too prone to abuſe their real or ſuppoſed advantages. The Greeks regarded the reſt of the world as *barbarians*. And Socrates is introduced by Plato, in his fifth book of laws, as directing the Greeks

* Lev. xix. 24. xxv. 35. Numb. xxvi. 11. Deut. x. 17, 18, 19. xxiv. 19, 20, 21, 22.

to regard the *barbarians* as *by nature* their *enemies*, and as preſcribing a conduct towards them which is little reconcileable to the common rules of humanity. Chriſtians cannot but look upon it as their great advantage, that they are diſtinguiſhed from many other nations which are ſunk in the groſſeſt ignorance and barbariſm. And it would argue the moſt inexcuſable ſtupidity and ingratitude not to be very thankful to providence on this account. But this is no juſt reaſon for treating thoſe nations with contempt and cruelty.

The fourth objection which was mentioned was, that there are ſeveral paſſages in the ſcriptures which are falſe, abſurd, and unphiloſophical. And he particularly inſtances in the account there given of the creation of the world, and the fall of man.

With reſpect to the former, he ſays, "It is impoſſible to read "what Moſes writ on that ſubject, without feeling contempt for "him as a philoſopher, and horror as a divine. For he is to be "conſidered under both theſe characters*." And he takes upon him to pronounce, that "we cannot admit Moſes's teſtimony "concerning the beginning of the world for divine, without "abſurdity and blaſphemy†."

There cannot in my opinion be a greater inſtance of the moſt unreaſonable prejudice, than the objections that have been raiſed againſt the authority of Moſes, from the account he gives of the creation. Whoſoever will take the pains impartially to compare it with the accounts left us in the traditions of the moſt ancient nations, concerning which the reader may ſee the introduction to the *Univerſal Hiſtory*, relating to the *Coſmogony, or the Creation of the World*, will find the account given by Moſes ſo vaſtly ſuperior, as will naturally lead him to regard it as of an higher original. There is a majeſty and ſublimity, as well as ſimplicity and plainneſs in it, which hath greatly recommended it to the beſt judges. Nothing could be ſo proper to anſwer the deſign he had in view, as to begin his book with an account of the creation of the world. If he had merely aſſerted in general, that God created the world, and all things that are therein, this would not have made ſuch an impreſſion upon the people as was proper and neceſſary in a matter of ſuch vaſt importance, and which, according

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 231. 283. † Ibid. p. 308.

to

to the author's own obſervation, " leads to the acknowledgment " of the Supreme Being, by a proof levelled to the meaneſt un- " derſtanding*." And therefore it was proper to give them more diſtinct notions of the formation of things by the divine power and wiſdom. Accordingly he diſtinctly mentions the light, the firmament, the ſun, the moon, and ſtars, the earth, the ſea, the plants, and vegetable products of the earth, the various kinds of animals, and laſtly, man himſelf; and aſſures them, that theſe various appearances were not owing to a variety of cauſes, which, according to Lord Bolingbroke, the firſt men in the rude uncultivated ages would be naturally led to believe, but were all owing to one and the ſame glorious original cauſe and author. It is evident, that what was principally deſigned was to give an account of the formation of our ſyſtem, as far as relates particularly to our earth: at the ſame time aſſuring them, that the ſun, moon, and ſtars, all the heavenly bodies, which the nations were apt to adore, were created by God. The whole is repreſented as having been effected with an Almighty facility. That God only ſpoke or commanded, and it was done. All things were created by the word of his power, which tends to give a noble idea of the power and majeſty of the great Creator. Yet this great work, according to Moſes, was carried on in an orderly progreſſive way. There is a general account given of the viſible and ſucceſſive changes wrought each day upon the face of the earth till it was completed. But our author, who is determined on every ſuppoſition to find fault with the Moſaic account, blames Moſes for repreſenting the ſolar ſyſtem, or even this our planet, as having been the work of ſix days. He thinks " ſuch " precipitation ſeems repugnant to that general order of nature " which God eſtabliſhed, and which he obſerves in his produc- " tions†." As if the firſt formation of things muſt neceſſarily have been carried on in the ſlow way which is now obſerved, after the order and courſe of nature is once eſtabliſhed. It is perfectly agreeable to reaſon to believe that the firſt formation of the world, and the ſeveral ſpecies of things in it, did not take up a long ſpace of time: and yet there is no reaſon to think that it was all perfected in an inſtant, without any intervals, though it would

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 253. † Ibid. p. 233.

have been eaſy to the divine power to have done ſo. And this writer, who ſeems here to think the creation as repreſented by Moſes to have been too much precipitated, and accompliſhed in too ſhort a time, ſeems elſewhere to think that it was too ſlowly carried on. For he ſays, "we muſt not conceive the world to "have been made by a laborious progreſſion—God willed it to "exiſt, and it exiſted*."

As to the particular order in which the creation was carried on, according to the account given by Moſes, this writer, with all his confidence, has not been able to prove, that there is any thing in it inconſiſtent with reaſon or with true philoſophy: though he has paſſed a ſevere cenſure on thoſe who have endeavoured to "reconcile the Moſaic account to reaſon and na-"ture, and to wreſt natural philoſophy into an agreement with "it†." He inſtances in Moſes's ſaying, that "light was created, "and the diſtinction of night and day, of evening and morning, "was made, before the ſun, the moon, and the ſtars‡." But we know ſo little of the real nature of light, that no man can pretend poſitively to determine, that it could not have made its appearance before the ſun and moon and planets were completed in their preſent form and order. As it ſeems to be the nobleſt ſubſtance in the material world, it is reaſonable to believe, that at the firſt formation of things it was firſt created, or at leaſt ſeparated from the chaotic maſs, and put in motion, ſo as to make a diſtinction between light and darkneſs, and ſome kind of ſucceſſion and viciſſitude of the one and the other, anſwering to day and night, evening and morning: though it is evident, from the account given of the work of the fourth day, that it was not till then that the ſun, moon, and ſtars, were rendered conſpicuous to the earth, and the order and courſe of things fully ſettled, ſo as to cauſe the proper diſtinction of times and ſeaſons, days, months, years; for which reaſon no notice is taken of the formation of thoſe heavenly bodies till that day. It is to little purpoſe to ſay, as his Lordſhip has done, that "Moſes was as ignorant of the "true ſyſtem of the univerſe as any of the people of his age." This is more than he can prove. But if it were ſo, it was not

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 111. † Ibid. p. 181.
‡ Ibid. vol. iii. p. 301.

neceſſary,

neceſſary, ſuppoſing him inſpired as a prophet or a lawgiver, that he ſhould be inſpired alſo with a knowledge of the true ſyſtem of philoſophy and aſtronomy. Or, if he had been ever ſo well acquainted with it, it would have been altogether improper to have given an exactly philoſophical account of the creation: nor could any ſuch account of it have been given, conſidering the different ſyſtems of philoſophy that have obtained, but what would have been as much found fault with, and perhaps more, than that which he has given. The truth is, ſuch an account would have been no way accommodated to the capacities of the people: it would have perplexed and confounded, inſtead of inſtructing them. It was proper, for many reaſons, that the account ſhould be drawn up in a popular way, and yet in a way that is at the bottom agreeable to the real truth of things. So the moon is very fitly called a *great light*, and it may be truly called ſo, becauſe it yields great light to us, though, ſtrictly and philoſophically ſpeaking, it has no light of its own at all. And now, after all our improvements in philoſophy and aſtronomy, we ſtill ſpeak of the light of the moon, of the ſun's motion, riſing, and ſetting.—And the man that in a moral or theological, or in an hiſtorical diſcourſe, would uſe a different language, would only render himſelf ridiculous.

Lord Bolingbroke farther objects, that though Moſes aſcribes the creation to God, "yet when God proceeds to the creation "of man, he calls in other beings to co-operate with him, and "make man in his and their image. This ſeems to lay a foun- "dation for polytheiſm, which is inconſiſtent with that unity of "God which my reaſon ſhews me, and which the general tenor "even of the Moſaic hiſtory atteſts*." And ſince by his own acknowledgment the general tenor of the Moſaic writings leads us to aſſert the unity of God, this plainly ſhews that the paſſage he refers to was not deſigned to infer polytheiſm. And if there be ſomething unuſual in the manner of expreſſion, it muſt be interpreted in a conſiſtency with the whole Moſaic law; nor can it be ſuppoſed that Moſes intended it otherwiſe. And this plainly appears from the very paſſage itſelf, conſidered in its connexion. For after having told us, Gen. i. ver. 26. that *God ſaid, Let us make man in our image, after our likeneſs:* he adds,

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 390.

ver. 27. *And God created man in his image, in the image of God created he him*: where it is plain, that what is expreſſed plurally in one verſe is ſingular in the other: and that the deſign of thoſe expreſſions, *Let us make man in our image*, was not to ſignify that other beings joined with God in the formation of man, and in making him in their as well as God's image; ſince it is expreſsly declared in the words immediately following, that *God created man in his own image*, and for the greater emphaſis, and as it were on purpoſe to prevent ſuch a conſtruction, it is again repeated, *in the image of God created he him*. I would obſerve by the way, how much nobler the account is, that is given by Moſes of the formation of man, than that which was given by the ancient Egyptians, of whoſe wiſdom and philoſophy our author ſpeaks in ſuch high terms, and from whom he would have us believe Moſes derived all his wiſdom and knowledge. They taught, as he obſerves from Diodorus Siculus, that "the firſt of "human kind were quickened into life by the ſun, and were ani-"mated ſyſtems of mud." And he thinks, that "if we are per-"ſuaded that this world had a beginning in time, we muſt of "neceſſity aſſume, that the firſt man and the firſt woman, or that "one man and one woman at leaſt, were produced in full "ſtrength and vigour of body and mind*." This is agreeable to the Moſaic account, which is perfectly conſiſtent with reaſon, though there is no great likelihood that reaſon alone could have aſſured us of it; for, as his Lordſhip there obſerves, "how men "came into the world, reaſon will tell us no better than hiſ-"tory or tradition does." This therefore is a proper ſubject of divine revelation.

It argues a ſtrange diſpoſition to find fault, to lay ſuch a ſtreſs as Lord Bolingbroke has done, upon that particular manner of expreſſion Moſes makes uſe of, that God *reſted the ſeventh day from all his work*, as if it were alone ſufficient to deſtroy the authority of the Moſaic writings. No man that impartially conſiders the noble account there given of the creation, that God is repreſented as having only ſpoke and it was done, can reaſonably imagine, that the deſign of thoſe expreſſions was to ſignify, that God was *wearied with the laborious work of creation*, as

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 107, 108.

our

our author expreſſes it, and needed reſt after it, as men do who are tired with their work. *Haſt thou not known*, ſaith the prophet Iſaiah, *Haſt thou not heard, that the everlaſting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?* Iſaiah xl. 28. All therefore that can be underſtood by that manner of expreſſion, is only this, that God had then finiſhed the work of the creation, and had a divine complacency in it.

As to the Moſaic account of the fall of man, it is what his Lordſhip has frequently endeavoured to expoſe. And it has been a conſtant ſubject of ridicule to the deiſtical writers in every age. But if it be candidly and impartially examined, as it ſtands connected with the account given by Moſes of man's original dignity, it will appear to be of great importance, and to furniſh inſtructions of excellent uſe.

The account given by Moſes of the ſtate in which man was at firſt created, is ſhort, but ſuch as tends to give a noble idea of his dignity; as having been created in the image of God, in a ſtate of purity and innocence, and inveſted with a dominion over all the other creatures in this lower world. His Lordſhip, in a paſſage cited above, ſays, that "ſuppoſing the world to have had a "beginning in time, we muſt of neceſſity aſſume, that the firſt "man and the firſt woman, or that one man and one woman at "leaſt, were produced in full ſtrength and vigour of body and "mind." And indeed man cannot reaſonably be ſuppoſed to have been at firſt created in a ſtate of infancy, for then he muſt ſoon have periſhed. He was therefore formed in a ſtate of maturity, as were the other animals, and undoubtedly in a ſound and happy conſtitution of body; and it is equally reaſonable to ſuppoſe that he was created in an anſwerable perfection of mind: and that conſequently there was in man at his firſt creation a perfect harmony and juſt balance in the ſeveral faculties of his nature, that his intellectual and moral powers were ſound and clear, and uncorrupt, his appetites and paſſions in a ſtate of juſt ſubjection to reaſon and the law of the mind, and his affections rightly diſpoſed. Here then is a ſtate of moral rectitude, in which, according to all the dictates of reaſon and good ſenſe, man muſt be ſuppoſed to have been created. Nor can any thing be more abſurd than to ſuppoſe, that this noble creature, who was

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conſtituted lord of this inferior creation, the crown and ornament of God's works here below, made his firſt appearance in the world, as a huge over-grown infant, in full vigour indeed and beauty of body, but a mere child in underſtanding, and with a ſoul utterly unfurniſhed. It is reaſonable to believe, that he that made him would not turn him out into the world abſolutely deſtitute of knowledge and ideas, but that he immediately endued him with ſo much knowledge of things, eſpecially of his Maker, of the creation of the world, and of his duty, as qualified him for anſwering the ends of his being. Moſes informs us, that great things were done for him by the beneficent Creator: that he was pleaſed, in his great goodneſs, to provide a peculiarly delightful ſeat for the entertainment of his innocent creature, a bliſsful paradiſe, where he was placed amidſt a profuſion of joys. And as there was none among the inferior animals that were put under his dominion, with whom he could cultivate that ſociety and friendſhip for which his nature was formed, it pleaſed God to make another creature of his own kind, bone of his bone, and fleſh of his fleſh, adorned with all the charms of beauty and innocence, to whom he was to be united in the deareſt ties of love. And from them was to proceed a race of creatures of the ſame ſpecies.

In this ſtate man was undoubtedly obliged by the law of his creation to obey and adore his Creator and Sovereign Lord and Benefactor, and to yield a ready obedience to all his known commands. But though univerſal obedience was his duty, Moſes acquaints us, that there was a particular command given him by way of trial. Nor was there any thing in this unbecoming the Supreme Wiſdom and Goodneſs. Since God was pleaſed to conſtitute him lord of this inferior creation, and had given him ſo large a grant, and ſo many advantages, it was manifeſtly proper, in the nature of things, that he ſhould require ſome particular inſtance of homage and fealty, to put him in mind that he was under the dominion of a higher Lord, on whom he depended, and to whom he owed an unreſerved ſubjection. And what properer inſtance could there be, in the circumſtances man was then in, than his being obliged, in obedience to the divine command, to abſtain from one or more of the delicious fruits of paradiſe? It pleaſed God to inſiſt only upon his abſtaining from one,

one, at the ſame time that he indulged him a full liberty as to all the reſt. And this ſerved both as an act of homage to the Supreme Lord, from whoſe bountiful grant he held paradiſe, and all its enjoyments, and it was alſo fitted to teach him a noble and uſeful leſſon of abſtinence and ſelf-denial, one of the moſt important leſſons in a ſtate of probation, and alſo of unreſerved ſubmiſſion to God's authority and will, and an implicit reſignation to his ſovereign wiſdom and goodneſs. It tended to habituate him to keep his ſenſitive appetite in a perfect ſubjection to the law of reaſon, in which conſiſts the proper order and harmony of the human nature, and to take him off from too cloſe an attachment to ſenſible good, and alſo to keep his deſire after knowledge within juſt bounds, ſo as to be content with knowing what is good and uſeful, and not to pry with an unwarrantable curioſity into things that it did not belong to him to know.

Moſes farther informs us, that our firſt parents tranſgreſſed the command given them for the trial of their obedience, by eating the forbidden fruit. How they came to do this, when they were created innocent and upright, may ſeem ſtrange, and really is ſo. But the ſame objection might have been made with regard to the firſt ſin, or tranſgreſſion of the divine law, whenever it happened, whether among men or angels. For, except we ſuppoſe them to have been created actually depraved, or under a neceſſity of ſinning, which would be to make God himſelf the author of ſin, they muſt have been formed in a ſtate of purity and rectitude, and capable of keeping the law of God, which was given them as the rule of their obedience: and then the difficulty would recur, how came they to fall and diſobey, when they might ſo eaſily have ſtood and continued in their obedience? All that can be ſaid, is, that man, though created upright, and without any wrong affections or diſpoſitions, yet was a free agent, and therefore had it in his power to diſobey. The account given by Moſes of the firſt ſin is very ſhort. There were probably ſeveral circumſtances attending it, which we are not informed of. But from what is ſaid of it, we may gather, that the tempter, who, by the conſent of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian church, was an evil ſpirit making uſe of the ſerpent as an inſtrument, endeavoured both to work upon the ſenſitive appetite, and upon that deſire of knowledge and pre-eminence ſo natural to the human mind, and

which

which is of great advantage when kept within proper bounds. He might probably pretend, that the tree had a hidden excellent virtue in it, of which he might plead his own experience as a proof; and that therefore they had ſome way miſunderſtood the command, or at leaſt God would not be ſevere upon them if they tranſgreſſed it. If they had exerciſed their thinking powers, as they might and ought to have done, they might eaſily have ſeen through theſe ſpecious illuſions. But this they neglected, and were inexcuſable in doing ſo; ſince they ought not to have hearkened to any pretences or inſinuations whatſoever, againſt an expreſs divine command, ſo plainly given, and which was particularly deſigned as a trial of their obedience, and was ſo eaſy to be obſerved. Their diſobeying in ſuch circumſtances was in effect an attempt to throw off the allegiance they owed to God, an inſurrection againſt his ſovereign authority, and an arraigning his governing wiſdom, and the baſeſt ingratitude to his infinite goodneſs, which had placed them in ſuch a noble and happy ſtation, and had heaped ſo many favours and benefits upon them. And now they had nothing but diſmal proſpects before them: there was an unhappy change in the face of things: they were expelled out of paradiſe: the earth loſt much of its beauty and fertility: and they became ſubject to many pains, diſeaſes, and death. Yet God did not utterly caſt them off. He gave them tokens of his readineſs to receive them to his grace and favour upon their ſincere repentance: and by the original promiſe, the true nature and deſign of which was probably more diſtinctly explained to our firſt parents than is mentioned in that ſhort account, he gave them to underſtand, that he would not leave them to periſh without remedy under the curſe and miſery brought upon them by means of the tempter; and that he would raiſe up for them a glorious Deliverer, who was to proceed from the woman's ſeed, and to reſcue them from the miſeries and ruin to which they had expoſed themſelves by their ſin and apoſtacy. And there is reaſon to think, that they had hopes given them, that though they were ſtill to be ſubject to many evils, and to temporal death, as the effects and puniſhment of ſin, yet upon their repentance, and ſincere, though imperfect obedience, they were to be raiſed to a better life. And accordingly the hopes of pardoning mercy, and the expectation of a future life,

life, ſeem to have obtained from the beginning, and to have ſpread generally among mankind, and made a part of the primitive religion derived from the firſt parents and anceſtors of the human race.

I have laid theſe things together, that we may the better form a judgment concerning the Moſaic account. The ſum of it is this: That man was originally created pure and upright, conſtituted ſoon after his creation in a happy paradiſe, and admitted to many tokens of the divine love and favour; but that he fell from that ſtate, by ſinning againſt God, and violating the command given him as a teſt of his obedience; and that he thereby brought death and miſery into the world, with all the penal evils to which the human nature is now obnoxious. And theſe are excellent inſtructions. What can be more agreeable to right reaſon, or have a better effect, when really believed, than that God made man at firſt upright and happy, in a ſtate of moral rectitude: that ſin, which was owing to his wilful defection from God, was the ſource of all the evils to which the human nature is now expoſed, and which therefore are not chargeable on God, or on his original conſtitution, but on man himſelf: that mankind are now in a lapſed ſtate, but not forſaken of God, who hath in his great goodneſs provided a proper remedy, and hath been pleaſed to aſſure them of his readineſs to receive them to his grace and favour, and to accept and reward their repentance and ſincere obedience.

And now upon this view of things it will be no hard matter to anſwer the objections which Lord Bolingbroke hath urged againſt the Moſaic account of the fall.

He repreſents it as abſurd to ſuppoſe, that "this moral ſyſtem "was deſtroyed by the wiles of a ſerpent, and by the eating of "an apple, almoſt as ſoon as it began, againſt the intention as "well as command of the Creator*." As to the command given to our firſt parents to abſtain from the fruit of a particular tree, at the ſame time that they had a full grant made to them of all the other delicious fruits of paradiſe, it had nothing in it inconſiſtent with the divine goodneſs; and it hath been ſhewn, that in the circumſtances man was then in, it was a command very proper

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 301.

to

to be given; and the tranſgreſſing this command, at the ſolicitations of any tempter whatſoever, was an inexcuſable act of diſobedience: that this ſin was committed againſt the *intention as well as command of the Creator*, is very true, if by its being againſt his intention be underſtood that it was what he did not encourage or approve; though it was what he foreſaw, and thought fit in his wiſe providence to permit. He urges indeed, that "God might have prevented man's fall by a little leſs indulgence "to what is called free-will *." And he elſewhere mentions the "ſeverity with which God puniſhed our firſt parents, for a fault "which he foreknew they would commit, when he abandoned "their free-will to the temptation of committing it †." This, if it proved any thing, would prove that it is unjuſt in God ever to puniſh any man for any ſin at all: for whenever men ſin, it may be ſaid that he leaves them to their own free-will, and that it is what he foreknew. No doubt God might, by an exertion of his abſolute omnipotency, have hindered our firſt parents from ſinning; and he might have hindered either men or angels from ever ſinning at all. But we ſee, that in fact he chuſes, as a moral governor, to deal with men as moral agents, and leaves them to the liberty of their own wills. And in the caſe here referred to, man had full power to have ſtood, and to have reſiſted the temptation; and his not ſo doing was his own fault, and not owing to any defect of goodneſs in God. He himſelf furniſhes a proper anſwer to his own objection, when he obſerves, that "it may be truly ſaid that God, when he gave us our reaſon, left "us to our free-will, to make a proper or improper uſe of it; "ſo that we are obliged to our Creator for a certain rule and "ſufficient means of arriving at happineſs, and have none to "blame but ourſelves when we fail of it ‡." And to the ſame purpoſe he ſaith, that "God has given to his human creatures the "materials of phyſical and moral happineſs, and has given them "faculties and powers to recollect and apply theſe materials. "What we ſhall do for ourſelves, he has left to the freedom of "our elections §."

He urges, that "the doctrine of two independent principles,

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 301.
† Ibid. vol. v. p. 321.
‡ Ibid. p. 388.
§ Ibid. p. 474.

"the

" the one good, the other evil, is not ſo abſurd as the doctrine " of an inferior dependent being, who is aſſumed to be the author " of all evil; and that to affirm, that a God ſovereignly good, " ſuffers an inferior dependent being to deface his work in any " ſort, and to make his other creatures both criminal and miſer- " able, is ſtill more injurious to the Supreme Being*." And again

* Ibid. vol. iv. p. 20. The ſcripture doctrine of evil angels, of whom Satan is repreſented as the head, hath been ſo often found fault with, that it may not be improper on this occaſion to offer ſomething for obviating the prejudices which ſome have conceived againſt the ſacred writings on this account. That God made creatures of a nobler order, and of ſublime capacities and powers vaſtly ſuperior to man, is what Lord Bolingbroke himſelf allows to be very probable*. And as it is reaſonable to believe that they were made free agents, why may it not be ſuppoſed that ſome of them made a wrong uſe of their liberty, and became depraved and corrupt? And if one of them, of diſtinguiſhed power and dignity above the reſt, by a perverſion of his great abilities, became eminent in evil and wickedneſs, and particularly inſtrumental to draw others to ſin and diſobedience, it cannot be pretended that this ſuppoſition carrieth any abſurdity in it. And in ſuch a caſe it might be expected, that he and his aſſociates would prove enemies to all goodneſs and virtue, and that having fallen from their own felicity and glory, they would envy the happineſs of others, and endeavour to draw them into guilt and miſery. This is what we often ſee bad men do, who are arrived to a great degree of corruption and depravity. His Lordſhip indeed pretendeth, that the ſuppoſition of an *inferior dependent being who is aſſumed to be the author of all evil*, is more abſurd than the doctrine of *two independent principles, the one good, the other evil*. If by being the *author of all evil*, be underſtood that there is any one inferior dependent being, who is the ſole univerſal cauſe of all evil, and that there is no evil but what he is the author of, it is wrong to charge the ſcriptures or chriſtian divines with aſſuming it: but to paſs by this miſrepreſentation, it is evident to the common ſenſe of mankind, that there is a vaſt difference between the ſuppoſition of an Almighty and independent evil being, a ſuppoſition full of abſurdity and horror, and that of an inferior dependent being, who was made originally pure and upright, but fell by his own voluntary defection into vice and wickedneſs, and who, though permitted in many inſtances to do miſchief, and to act according to his evil inclinations, as wicked men are often permitted to do in this preſent ſtate, yet is ſtill under the ſovereign controul of the moſt holy, wiſe, and powerful governor of the world. For in this caſe we may be ſure, from the divine wiſdom, juſtice and goodneſs, that God will in the fitteſt ſeaſon inflict a puniſhment upon that evil being, and his aſſociates, proportionable to their crimes; and

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 177. Vol. v. p. 329, 330.

that

again he repeats it, that " it is inconſiſtent with the goodneſs and " wiſdom of God, to ſuffer an inferior being, his creature, and a " creature in actual rebellion, to baffle his deſigns*." And if he ſuffered this evil being to compel them to be criminal and miſerable, it would be ſo: but not, if he ſuffered him only to tempt and to ſeduce, and at the ſame time made them every-way able to withſtand the temptation, and provided them with ſufficient means to that purpoſe; which was the caſe of our firſt parents. God had done all that was proper for him to do as a moral governor, to prevent the defection. He had formed them in a ſtate of moral rectitude, and endued them with good diſpoſitions. The creation was freſh about them, and the glorious evidences of the divine wiſdom, power, and goodneſs! They knew that he was the Author of their beings, and that from him flowed all the bleſſings they enjoyed. He had given them the moſt expreſs injunction in the plaineſt terms, and ſtrongly inforced, to prevent their diſobedience. I ſee not therefore why God ſhould exert his own omnipotency to hinder ſatan from tempting them, ſince he could only tempt but not compel: and they were ſufficiently armed and provided againſt every temptation that could befal them, if they would but uſe the ſtrength and advantages they had; which, all things conſidered, were ſuperior to thoſe that any of their poſterity have been ſince poſſeſſed of.

His Lordſhip takes notice of " the ſeverity which had been " exerciſed on the whole race of mankind, who ſhare in the " puniſhment, though not in the crime†." And again he charges the divines for ſuppoſing " that all mankind were puniſhed for

that in the mean time he ſetteth bounds to their malice and rage, and provideth ſufficient aſſiſtance for thoſe whom they endeavour to ſeduce to evil, whereby they may be enabled to repel their temptations, if it be not their own faults; and that he will in his ſuperior wiſdom bring good out of their evil, and overrule even their malice and wickedneſs, for promoting the great ends of his government. This is the repreſentation made to us of this matter in the holy ſcripture; nor is there any thing in this that can be proved to be contrary to ſound reaſon. And we may juſtly conclude, that in the final iſſue of things, the wiſdom, as well as righteouſneſs, of this part of the divine adminiſtration, will moſt illuſtriouſly appear.

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 321. † Ibid. vol. v. p. 321.

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"the ſin of one *." That mankind are now ſubject to the evils Moſes mentions as the conſequence of the fall, barrenneſs of the ground, pains and ſickneſs in child-bearing, diſeaſes and death, is undeniable. The only difference between the Moſaic account, and that of thoſe who ridicule it, is, that they ſuppoſe all theſe evils to be the neceſſary effects of the original conſtitution and appointment of God, at the firſt formation of man and of the world: but Moſes ſuppoſes the original conſtitution of things to have been much more happy; and that all theſe evils were brought into the world in conſequence of man's voluntary defection from God. And which of theſe ſuppoſitions is moſt honourable to God, and moſt likely, if believed, to have a good effect upon the minds of men, may be left to any impartial and thinking perſon to determine. And it ſeems very odd, that it ſhould be repreſented as unjuſt in God, to lay thoſe evils upon men in conſequence of the ſin of our firſt parents, which they might eaſily have avoided, when it is accounted no reflection upon the juſtice and goodneſs of God to lay thoſe evils upon men by the original conſtitution, without any regard to ſin, either of their firſt parents, or their own.

On ſuppoſition that Adam and Eve were the fountains and protoplaſts of the human race, it ſeems evident, that their poſterity muſt ſuffer under the conſequences of their defection. If they were baniſhed from paradiſe, and it was juſt they ſhould be ſo, their poſterity could not expect to be continued in it. If their natures became tainted, and ſubject to diſeaſes and death, they could only convey tainted and mortal natures to their offſpring. It cannot be denied, that, in the ordinary courſe of providence, children often ſuffer evils that were originally owing to the crimes of their parents and anceſtors. Wicked parents often by their bad conduct forfeit advantages for their children as well as themſelves, and not only propagate diſtempered bodies to them, but, conſidering the great influence that the bodily craſis and temperament hath upon the diſpoſitions of the mind, they are frequently inſtrumental in conveying bodily conſtitutions, which incline them to vicious affections and diſorderly paſſions, though they do not bring them under an abſolute neceſſity of

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 485.—See alſo ibid. p. 284.

ſinning, or imitating their father's vices. Since it is appointed that mankind ſhould be propagated in a way of ſucceſſive generation, it is evident that children muſt in many caſes be greatly dependent on their parents, and derive great bleſſings or evils from them. And this may on many accounts be ſuppoſed to hold much more ſtrongly with reſpect to the firſt parents of the human race, than any others.

As to the exceptions our author makes againſt ſome particular expreſſions made uſe of, and circumſtances related, in the Moſaic account of the fall, they are no other than what have been frequently repeated and anſwered. Dr. Tindal had urged the ſame objections, and ſeveral others, more diſtinctly, and with greater force; and I have conſidered them largely and particularly in my anſwer to that writer: to which therefore I beg leave to refer, having already inſiſted longer on this ſubject than I intended*. I would only farther obſerve, that ſome remarkable traces of the primitive paradiſiacal ſtate of man, and a fall from that ſtate, are obſervable in the traditions of the ancient ſages, in different parts of the world. And there is great reaſon to think, that at the time when Moſes writ, thoſe traditions were more diſtinctly known. Lord Bolingbroke pronounces the account of the fall to be a *moral, philoſophical, Egyptian allegory*, deſigned to account for the introduction of evil †. And if he had looked upon it in that light, he had no right to urge the literal ſenſe of it as an objection againſt the authority of the Moſaic writings.

I proceed in the laſt place to conſider what his Lordſhip has offered with regard to the ſanctions of the law of Moſes. He obſerves, that "in the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, "Moſes, on the renewal of the covenant between God and the "people, employs no argument to induce the latter to a ſtrict ob- "ſervation of it, of an higher nature than promiſes of immediate "good, and threatenings of immediate evil. They are exhorted "to keep the law, not for the ſake of the law, nor for the ſake "of God, but for conſiderations of another kind, and where "not only their wants were to be ſupplied, but all their appetites "and paſſions to be gratified—their avarice, and all their other "appetites and paſſions. God purchaſed, as it were, their obe-

* See Anſwer to Chriſtianity as old as the Creation, vol. ii. chap. xiv.

† Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 330.

"dience

" dience with this mercenary bargain *." That we may judge of the conſiſtency of this writer, it is to be obſerved, that he himſelf, when ſpeaking in high terms of the law of nature, as having ſufficient proofs of a *divine ſanction*, and a *divine original*, affirms the ſanctions of that law to be *only temporal*, and that they are ſuch as affect *nations collectively*, not *men individually*. And he proves theſe divine ſanctions, as he calls them, to be ſufficient, becauſe ſuch as theſe were the ſanctions of the law of Moſes †. He often inſiſts upon it, that the only ſanction of the natural law appointed by divine providence is this, that national virtue ſhall produce national happineſs, and national vice ſhall produce national miſery. If therefore national bleſſings were promiſed in the Moſaic conſtitution as rewards of their obedience, and national evils and calamities denounced as the puniſhment of their wickedneſs and diſobedience, there was nothing in this, according to his ſcheme, but what was highly proper, and perfectly agreeable to the law of nature. Yet he thinks fit to repreſent it as a *mercenary bargain;* as if it were wrong to annex any ſanctions at all to that law; for if any were annexed, they muſt, upon his ſcheme of principles, be only of a temporal nature. As to what he obſerves, that " the Iſraelites were exhorted to keep the law, " not for the ſake of the law, nor for the ſake of God, but for " conſiderations of another kind, in which all their appetites and " paſſions, their ambition, avarice, &c. were to be gratified," this is very unfairly repreſented. The bleſſings promiſed in the paſſage he refers to, Deut. xxviii. 1—14. are indeed chiefly of a national kind. But there is no promiſe made to them of extenſive conqueſt and univerſal empire; and it is evident, as I have elſewhere ſhewn ‡, that their conſtitution was not deſigned or fitted for it. If they obeyed the laws given them, they were to have fruitful and healthful ſeaſons, to enjoy peace, plenty, and many bleſſings, in their own land. And it was promiſed them, that if they were invaded by their enemies, they ſhould be protected againſt them, and prove victorious over them: That they ſhould be happy and honourable above all other nations: And that God would eſtabliſh them an holy people to himſelf, which included

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 291, 292. † Ibid. vol. v. p. 90, 91.
‡ See anſwer to Morgan, vol. i. p. 134, 135.

a promiſe of having their ſpiritual privileges continued to them, with the tokens of God's ſpecial favour and gracious preſence among them, which was their happineſs and their glory. Any one that impartially conſiders the Moſaic writings, will find, that the laws there given to the Iſraelites are enforced upon them by a great variety of important conſiderations. The excellency of the laws themſelves is repreſented; as particularly Deut. iv. 6, 7, 8. And frequently is that ſhort but comprehenſive declaration ſubjoined to their laws, *I am the Lord, Jehovah.* They are urged to obedience by the conſideration of God's ſovereign authority and ſupreme dominion, of his infinite righteouſneſs and goodneſs, of the great things he hath done for them, and the ſpecial relation he ſtood in towards them, by the gratitude they owed to him for all his benefits, by the hope of his favour, and fear of his diſpleaſure. For they were taught that noble leſſon, that in and from him alone they were to look for happineſs, whether relating to the people in general, or to particular perſons.—And they were inſtructed to regard him as exerciſing a conſtant inſpection over them, and taking cognizance both of their outward actions, and of the inward affections and diſpoſitions of their hearts.

It may not be improper on this occaſion to obſerve, that his Lordſhip has taken upon him to affirm, that "there cannot be "any thing ſo impiouſly intereſted and craving, as the ſentiments "aſcribed by Moſes to the patriarchs." And he inſtances "in "Jacob's vow, and the conditional engagement he took with "God," Gen. xxviii. 20, 21, 22*. But to ſet this matter in a proper light, of which he has been pleaſed to make a moſt unjuſt repreſentation, it muſt be conſidered, that immediately before the account which is given of Jacob's vow, we are informed of a viſion he had when he was ſetting out upon his journey to Padan-Aram, in which God renewed the promiſes to him, which had been made to Abraham, concerning the giving the land of Canaan to his poſterity, and that in his ſeed all the families of the earth ſhould be bleſſed: at the ſame time aſſuring him, that he would be with him in all places whither he went, and would bring him again into that land, ver. 12—15. It was in conſequence of this viſion that Jacob made his vow the next morning; the de-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 291, 292.

ſign of which was to expreſs the ſenſe he had of the divine goodneſs, and his confidence in God's gracious protection; and to declare his ſolemn reſolution, that if God would be with him, and keep him in his way, and would give him *bread to eat*, and *raiment to put on* [which ſhews the moderation of his deſires], ſo that he ſhould come again to his father's houſe in peace, he would after his return make an open public acknowledgment of his gratitude and devotion to the Lord as his God, ſet apart that place where God had appeared to him to his worſhip, and would devote the tenth of all the ſubſtance God ſhould give him to his ſervice. This, inſtead of being *impiouſly intereſted and craving*, will appear to every perſon that judges candidly and impartially to be a great argument of the ſimplicity and goodneſs of Jacob's heart, and of a pious and well-diſpoſed mind: though undoubtedly it muſt appear abſurd to our author, who does not believe that God concerneth himſelf with the individuals of the human race.

His Lordſhip frequently obſerves, that in the law of Moſes there is no mention made of future rewards and puniſhments. He ſometimes poſitively aſſerts, that Moſes did not believe the immortality of the ſoul, nor the rewards and puniſhments of another life; for if he had, he would have taught it to that people; and that Solomon, the wiſeſt of their kings, decides againſt it*. But in other paſſages he inſinuates, that Moſes might poſſibly believe it himſelf, though he did not think proper to mention it to the people: and repreſents it as a moſt ſurprizing thing, that "a doctrine ſo uſeful to all religions, and therefore incorporated "into all the ſyſtems of Paganiſm, ſhould be left wholly out of "that of the Jews †." And he endeavours to draw an argument from this againſt the divine original of this conſtitution. This is what he particularly urgeth in the concluſion of the twenty-firſt of his Fragments and Eſſays in his fifth volume, where he introduces it in a very pompous manner, "as an obſervation, which "he does not remember to have ſeen or heard urged on one ſide, "or anticipated on the other, and which he thinks evidently "ſhews how abſurd as well as improper it is to aſcribe theſe Mo"ſaical laws to God." The obſervation is this: That "neither

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 290. † Ibid. vol. v. p. 238, 239.

"the people of Iſrael, nor their legiſlator perhaps, knew any "thing of another life, wherein the crimes committed in this "life are to be puniſhed.—Although he might have learned this "doctrine, which was not ſo much a ſecret doctrine, as it may "be preſumed the unity of the Supreme God was, among the "Egyptians. Whether Moſes had learned this among their "ſchools, cannot be determined; but this may be advanced with "aſſurance: If Moſes knew that crimes, and therefore idolatry, "one of the greateſt, were to be puniſhed in another life, he de-"ceived the people, in the covenant they made by his interven-"tion with God. If he did not know it, I ſay it with horror, "the conſequence, according to the hypotheſis I oppoſe, muſt "be, that God deceived both him and them. In either caſe, a "covenant or bargain was made, wherein the conditions of obe-"dience or diſobedience were not fully, nor by conſequence "fairly ſtated. The Iſraelites had better things to hope, and "worſe to fear, than thoſe that were expreſſed in it. And their "whole hiſtory ſeems to ſhew how much need they had of theſe "additional motives to reſtrain them from polytheiſm and ido-"latry, and to anſwer the aſſumed purpoſe of divine provi-"dence*." This is his boaſted argument; and what ſeems mightily to recommend it to him, he looks upon it to be new, and what no man had inſiſted on before.

My firſt remark upon it is this: That he could not with any conſiſtency urge the not making expreſs mention of a future ſtate, as an argument to prove, that *it is abſurd and impious to aſcribe the Moſaical law to God*, ſince it appears from ſeveral parts of his book, that he himſelf did not believe the rewards and puniſhments of a future ſtate. He ought rather, upon his hypotheſis, to have conceived a high opinion of Moſes's ſtrict regard to truth, ſince he choſe not to make uſe of a pious fraud, or of falſe and deceitful motives, when it would have been his intereſt, and for the advantage of his laws, to have done ſo. If it be ſaid, that this is only urged as an argument *ad hominem*, which, though falſe and inconcluſive in itſelf, yet is concluſive upon the hypotheſis of his adverſaries, and proper to diſtreſs and embarraſs them, they will perhaps find it no difficult matter to

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 195.

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defend themſelves againſt this dilemma: for if it ſhould be allowed, that neither Moſes, nor any of the people, had any aſſurance of a future ſtate, it would not follow, that God in not revealing it had deceived him or them. If indeed he had expreſsly told them, that the notion of a future ſtate was falſe, and that they had no rewards or puniſhments to fear after this life is at an end, then ſuppoſing there were future rewards and puniſhments, this would have been a deceiving them, in the ſtricteſt, propereſt ſenſe. But merely not to reveal it to them, was not to deceive them. And whereas he urges, that on that ſuppoſition there was a covenant or bargain made, in which the conditions of obedience and diſobedience were not fully, nor by conſequence fairly ſtated; this proceeds upon the ſuppoſition, that if God made a covenant with them, he would not deal fairly, if he did not lay before them all the rewards and puniſhments of their obedience and diſobedience; which is certainly a concluſion that cannot be juſtified. If God had only aſſured them in general, that, if they kept his commandments, they ſhould be entitled to his favour, and, if they diſobeyed, they ſhould feel the awful effects of his diſpleaſure, this ought to have been enough to have engaged them: and it could not be ſaid in that caſe that he dealt unfairly by them; eſpecially ſince he might have commanded their obedience, and demanded their ſubjection to his laws, in a way of abſolute authority, without any expreſs ſtipulations on his part at all. Whatever particular promiſes or threatenings he added, depended upon his ſovereign good pleaſure, and he might reveal thoſe things, in what meaſure or degree he in his wiſdom ſhould think fit. Our author himſelf has found out a reaſon for it, *viz.* that the doctrine of future rewards and puniſhments "was dreſſed up with ſo many fabulous cir-"cumſtances among the Egyptians, that it was hard to teach or "renew this doctrine in the minds of the Iſraelites, without giv-"ing an occaſion the more to recal the polytheiſtical fables, and "practiſe the idolatrous rites, they had learned during their cap-"tivity in Egypt*."

But let us put the other ſuppoſition, and which I take to be the true one, *viz.* that Moſes and the Iſraelites did believe a fu-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. 240, 241.

ture ſtate of rewards and punſhments. This writer himſelf frequently intimates, that it was believed among the Egyptians, and that it was not a part of the ſecret doctrine, confined only to a few, but was ſpread and propagated among the vulgar. It is therefore reaſonable to believe, that this doctrine obtained among the Iſraelites too, eſpecially as, by his own acknowledgment, it obtained among the Babylonians, and indeed among all the ancient nations, as far as we have any accounts left us of their ſentiments. And it cannot with the leaſt probability be ſuppoſed, that the Iſraelites were the only people that were ignorant of it, and had no notions of that kind among them at all: except we imagine that they were taught to believe the contrary; of which there is not the leaſt proof: nor is there any thing in the writings of Moſes to contradict that notion. On the contrary, there are ſeveral things in thoſe writings which by a fair conſtruction imply it. Our author ſeems to think, that the Moſaical account of the formation of man implies that his ſoul was a particle of the divinity*. There is no reaſon to ſuppoſe this. But it certainly leads us to acknowledge a remarkable diſtinction of the ſoul from the body: that it is a nobler ſubſtance, more nearly reſembling the divinity, and not, like the body, formed of the duſt of the ground. What Moſes ſaith of God's gracious acceptance of Abel's ſacrifice, who yet was murdered, and met with no reward of his piety, no good effects of God's acceptance of him, except we take in the conſideration of a future ſtate: The account he gives of the tranſlation of Enoch, that he *walked with God*, and *that he was not, for God took him*, which, in the moſt natural conſtruction, implies the taking him out of this world to a better ſtate: His repreſenting the patriarchs, as calling this their preſent life the *few and evil days of their pilgrimage*, which ſhewed they *looked for a better country, that is, an heavenly:* To which may be added, the accounts there given of the appearances of angels, which naturally led the Iſraelites to acknowledge an inviſible world of ſpirits: nor can any inſtance be brought of any nation, who believed the exiſtence of angels and ſeparate intelligences, and yet did not believe the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate: The expreſs declarations of Solo-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 480.

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mon, that the *righteous hath hope in his death;* the clear diſtinction he makes between the ſoul and body, that at death the latter ſhall *return to the earth as it was*, and the former, the *ſpirit, ſhall return to God that gave it;* and that there ſhall be a future account, in which *every work ſhall be brought into judgment*, with *every ſecret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil:* The aſſumption of Elias into heaven, which naturally led the thoughts of all that heard of it to another world, where good men ſhall be eminently rewarded: All theſe things, not to mention ſeveral paſſages in the Pſalms and in the Prophets which plainly look this way, convince me, that a future ſtate was all along believed among that people*. And indeed it does not appear, that, at the time of Moſes, any man had ariſen, as there did in the latter ages, who, through the vain deceit and falſe refinements of philoſophy, denied it. As to the promiſes and threatenings addreſſed to the people of Iſrael as a collective body, of which kind thoſe ſeem to be which are mentioned, Lev. xxvi. and Deut. xxviii. theſe no doubt were directly and immediately of a temporal nature: and the ſtriking repreſentations that are there made of the conſequences of their obedience or diſobedience in this preſent world, ſeem very well fitted to make ſtrong and vigorous impreſſions upon them, and to give them a lively ſenſe of the conſtant interpoſition of divine providence. But beſides this, the tenor of their law led them to think that the happineſs of every individual perſon among them, and his intereſt in the favour of God, depended upon his obedience to the divine commands, and the practice of righteouſneſs. This eſpecially ſeems to have been the deſign of that general declaration in the law, that the man that did the precepts there enjoined ſhould *live* by them. And there is no reaſon to think that they looked upon this as wholly confined to this preſent world. That it was underſtood to have a more extenſive view, may be reaſonably concluded from what is ſaid in the eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel, where the equity of the divine proceedings is vindicated, and where it is expreſsly declared, with the greateſt ſolemnity, concerning every particular perſon that ſhould forſake his

* See this more fully proved in the Anſwer to Dr. Morgan, vol. i. p. 339, *& ſeq.*

evil

evil ways, and turn to the practice of righteouſneſs, that he ſhould *not die*, but ſhould ſurely *live*, *i. e.* be happy; and concerning every wicked and impenitent ſinner, that he ſhould ſurely die, *i. e.* be miſerable; which muſt have its principal effect in a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments: ſince even under that conſtitution it often happened, that particular good men were expoſed to many outward evils and calamities, and that bad men had great outward proſperity. What made it more neceſſary to inſiſt explicitly and fully upon the doctrine of a future ſtate in the goſpel, was, that through the corruption of mankind the ancient belief of the immortality of the ſoul and a future ſtate was very much obſcured and defaced. As to the heathens, there were many among thoſe who made great pretenſions to learning and philoſophy that abſolutely rejected it, and moſt of thoſe who did not poſitively reject it, yet treated it as a thing doubtful and uncertain. And it had been ſo much blended with fables, that at laſt it ſeemed to have little hold even on vulgar opinion; as his Lordſhip obſerves, in a paſſage cited above. To which it may be added, that there was at that time a conſiderable party even among the Jews themſelves, conſiderable for their power and quality, though not for their numbers, who denied it. On all theſe accounts, it became the divine wiſdom to interpoſe by a more expreſs revelation, containing clearer diſcoveries, and fuller proofs of it, than had been ever given to mankind before. And this revelation was very properly brought by the moſt illuſtrious meſſenger that could be ſent from heaven, the Son of God himſelf, that glorious and divine perſon whoſe coming had been ſo long promiſed and foretold. To which it may be added, that as the goſpel did not contain a ſyſtem of laws immediately addreſſed to any particular nation, as the Moſaical was, ſo none of the promiſes or threatenings there delivered relate directly and immediately to national bleſſings or calamities, but are ſuch in which every individual of the human race ſhould look upon himſelf as nearly intereſted.

Thus I have conſidered the principal objections advanced by Lord Bolingbroke againſt the holy ſcriptures of the Old Teſtament, and eſpecially againſt the Moſaic writings. There are ſome other objections interſperſed, and which he rather briefly hints at than purſues, and which ſcarce deſerve a diſtinct conſideration.

ſideration. He thinks that a divine law ought always to have the effect. "Human laws may be eluded, and miſs of the effect. "But if God gives a law, it may be preſumed, that effectual care "ſhould be taken to make that law obſerved; whereas there ne-"ver was a law that leſs had the deſigned effect than that of "Moſes, from which the people were continually revolting*." This argument would hold equally againſt the law of nature, which he himſelf affirms to be the law of God, and yet owns that men have revolted from it in all ages. But it has been ſhewn, that the law of Moſes had actually a great effect, and that by virtue of it the worſhip of the one true God was maintained among the Jews, in a manner which eminently diſtinguiſhed them above the heathen nations: and that polity was ſurprizingly preſerved in all the revolutions of their ſtate till the coming of our Saviour, for which it remarkably prepared the way, and thus anſwered the ends the divine wiſdom had in view in inſtituting it.

He ſeems to blame Moſes for not having taken the proper meaſures to make his laws obſerved, as Ezra and Nehemiah did afterwards. But if the directions which Moſes gave had been purſued, never were there better and wiſer precautions taken to engage the people to make themſelves acquainted with their law, and oblige them to a careful obſervation of it. And all that Ezra and Nehemiah did was to bring things back as near as poſſible to the original inſtitution and deſign. The ſignal calamities inflicted upon the Jews in the time of the Babyloniſh captivity, the greateſt that had ever befallen them, the utter deſolation of their country, and their having been ſo long baniſhed from it, which calamities had been originally threatened in the law itſelf, and were regarded by them as ſignal puniſhments from heaven for their violation of it: this, together with their wonderful reſtoration at the time that had been fixed for it by the prophets, awakened in them a zeal againſt idolatry, and an attachment to their law, greater than ever they had ſhewn before.

He urges farther, that "a divine law ſhould have ſuch a clear-"neſs and preciſion in its terms, that it may not be in the power "of perſons to elude and perplex the meaning of it. And that "if it be not ſo, all that is ſaid about marks of divinity in any

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 393.

"law

" law that pretends to be revealed by God is mere cant *." This is particularly intended againſt the law of Moſes. And yet certain it is, that if the people frequently fell off into idolatrous practices, and perhaps endeavoured to reconcile theſe their practices with the worſhip of God as there preſcribed, this could not be juſtly charged upon any want of preciſion in the terms of the law. For what can be clearer and more preciſe than the commands there given againſt polytheiſm and idolatry? Nothing can be more unreaſonable, than what he ſometimes inſinuates, that if a revelation be given at all, it muſt be ſuch as it ſhould not be in the power of man to miſapprehend or miſrepreſent †. It may be of ſignal uſe to perſons of honeſt and candid minds, though it be not abſolutely incapable of being perverted and abuſed; which it could not be, if delivered in human language; except God ſhould, by an omnipotent energy, and by a conſtant miracle, overrule all the paſſions, inclinations, and prejudices of the human nature: the abſurdity of which ſuppoſition, though it be what this writer ſeems ſometimes to inſiſt upon, I need not take pains to expoſe.

He thinks, " the ſcriptures ought to be more perfect, according " to our ideas of human perfection, whether we conſider them as " books of law or of hiſtory, than any other books that are avow- " edly human ‡." I ſuppoſe he means that there ſhould be greater elegance of compoſition, beauty of language, exactneſs of method, or that they ſhould be more ſtrictly philoſophical. But perhaps what ſeems elegant to one nation would not appear ſo to another. The notions of elegance in ſtyle and compoſition were different among the Greeks and Romans, from what they were in the Eaſtern nations. And what might render the ſcriptures more perfect in the eyes of ſome perſons, might render them leſs perfect in other reſpects, and leſs fitted to anſwer the end for which they were deſigned. To talk of elegance of compoſition in human laws, or to blame acts of parliament for not being oratorical, would be thought a very odd objection. But it is the great excellency of the ſacred writings, that there is in the different parts of ſcripture what may pleaſe perſons of all taſtes. There

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 292, 293. 296.

† Ibid. vol. v. p. 545. vol. iv. p. 261. 267. ‡ Ibid. vol. iii. p. 290.

is

is a ſimplicity and plainneſs accommodated to the vulgar: and yet there is in many paſſages a ſublimity and majeſty not to be equalled, and which has gained the admiration of the ableſt judges.

As to what he ſometimes mentions concerning the multiplicity of copies, various readings, interpolations, I had occaſion fully to conſider theſe things in the *Reflections on Lord Bolingbroke's Letters on the Study and Uſe of Hiſtory*, p. 65, et ſeq. and ſhall not repeat what is there offered. He has ſlirts here and there againſt ſome particular paſſages of ſcripture, a diſtinct examination of which would carry me too far. And they are only ſuch as Dr. Tindal had urged before him, and which have been conſidered and obviated in the anſwers that were made to that writer. See particularly *Anſwer to Chriſtianity as old as the Creation*, vol. ii. chap. xi, xii.

LETTER XXXI.

The favourable Repreſentation made by Lord Bolingbroke of the excellent Nature and Deſign of the original Chriſtian Revelation—He gives up ſeveral of the Deiſtical Objections, and even ſeems to acknowledge its divine Original—Yet he endeavours to expoſe its Doctrines, and to invalidate its Proofs and Evidences—The Law of Nature and Chriſtianity not to be oppoſed to one another—The Goſpel not a Republication of the Doctrine of Plato—The pretended Oppoſition between the Goſpel of Chriſt and that of St. Paul conſidered—This Apoſtle vindicated againſt the Cenſures and Reproaches caſt upon him—The Miracles of Chriſtianity, if really wrought, owned by Lord Bolingbroke to be a ſufficient Proof—The Goſpels, by his own Acknowledgment, give a juſt Account of the Diſcourſes and Actions of Jeſus—Yet he has attempted to deſtroy their Credit—His Pretence, that it would be neceſſary to have the Originals of the Goſpels in our hands, or atteſted Copies of thoſe Originals, examined—The ſeveral Ways he takes to Account for the Propagation of Chriſtianity ſhewn to be inſufficient—What he offers concerning the little Effect Chriſtianity has had in the Reformation of Mankind, conſidered—Want of Univerſality no Argument againſt the Divinity of the Chriſtian Revelation—Its being founded on Faith not inconſiſtent with its being founded on rational Evidence.

SIR,

I NOW come, according to the method I propoſed, to conſider what relates to the Chriſtian revelation, ſtrictly and properly ſo called, as it was taught by Chriſt and his apoſtles, and is contained in the ſacred writings of the New Teſtament. Indeed whoſoever carefully conſiders and compares the ſeveral parts of Lord Bolingbroke's ſcheme, muſt be ſenſible, that the whole of it may juſtly be regarded as an attempt againſt Chriſtianity. If the principles he has laid down with regard to the moral attributes of God, divine providence, the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate, ſhould take place, the Chriſtian religion

ligion would be ſubverted at the very foundations. This is alſo the manifeſt intention of the account he gives of the law of nature. And one reaſon of the extreme virulence with which he hath attacked the law of Moſes and the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament, ſeems to be, the near connection there is between this and the religion of Jeſus, which he repreſents to have been originally intended by our Saviour as a ſyſtem of Judaiſm, and deſigned for no other nation but the Jews only*. But though all he hath offered againſt the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament may be regarded as deſigned to ſtrike at the authority of the Chriſtian revelation, yet there are ſome parts of his work which appear to be more particularly intended for that purpoſe, which therefore it will be neceſſary to take a diſtinct notice of.

But firſt it will be proper to make ſome obſervations on ſeveral paſſages in his writings, in which he ſeems to make very remarkable conceſſions in favour of pure genuine Chriſtianity, as taught by our Saviour and his apoſtles in the New Teſtament, and to make an advantageous repreſentation of its excellent nature and tendency.

After having obſerved, that ſome repreſent all religion founded on divine revelation as inconſiſtent with civil ſovereignty, and erecting a private conſcience that may and often is inconſiſtent with the public conſcience of the ſtate, and after inveighing againſt the ſpirit of Judaiſm, and Mahometaniſm, he undertakes to defend Chriſtianity againſt this objection, and aſſerts, that "no religion ever appeared in the world whoſe natural tendency "was ſo much directed to promote the peace and happineſs of "mankind." See the fourth ſection of his fourth Eſſay†. He declares, that "no ſyſtem can be more ſimple and plain than that "of natural religion, as it ſtands in the goſpel‡." And after having obſerved, that "beſides natural religion, there are two "other parts into which Chriſtianity may be analyzed—Duties "ſuperadded to thoſe of the former, and articles of belief that "reaſon neither could diſcover, nor can comprehend;" he acknowledges, that "both the duties required to be practiſed, and "the propoſitions required to be believed, are conciſely and

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 305. 328. 350.
† Ibid. p. 281, 282. ‡ Ibid. p. 290. 292.

"plainly

" plainly enough expreſſed in the original goſpel, properly ſo " called, which Chriſt taught, and which his four evangeliſts " recorded. But they have been alike corrupted by theology*." Speaking of the Chriſtian ſacraments of Baptiſm and the Lord's Supper, he ſays, " no inſtitutions can be imagined more ſimple, " nor more void of all thoſe pompous rites and theatrical repre- " ſentations that abounded in the religious worſhip of the heathens " and Jews, than theſe two were in their origin. They were " not only innocent but profitable ceremonies, becauſe they were " extremely proper to keep up the ſpirit of true natural religion, " by keeping up that of Chriſtianity, and to promote the obſer- " vation of moral duties, by maintaining a reſpect for the reve- " lation which confirmed them†." He declares, that " he will " not ſay, that the belief that Jeſus was the Meſſiah is the only " article of belief neceſſary to make men Chriſtians. There are " other things doubtleſs contained in the revelation he made of " himſelf, dependent on and relative to this article, without the " belief of which, I ſuppoſe, our Chriſtianity would be very de- " fective. But this I ſay, that the ſyſtem of religion which Chriſt " publiſhed, and his evangeliſts recorded, is a complete ſyſtem, to " all the purpoſes of religion natural and revealed. It contains " all the duties of the former; it enforces them by aſſerting the " divine miſſion of the Publiſher, who proved his aſſertions at " the ſame time by his miracles; and it enforces the whole law " of faith by promiſing rewards, and threatening puniſhments, " which he declares he will diſtribute when he comes to judge " the world‡." And he afterwards repeats it, that " Chriſtianity, " as it ſtands in the goſpel, contains not only a complete but a " very plain ſyſtem of religion. It is in truth the ſyſtem of na- " tural religion, and ſuch it might have continued, to the un- " ſpeakable advantage of mankind, if it had been propagated with " the ſame ſimplicity with which it was originally taught by " Chriſt himſelf§." He ſays, that " ſuppoſing Chriſtianity to " have been a human invention, it had been the moſt amiable " and the moſt uſeful invention that was ever impoſed on man- " kind for their good: And that Chriſtianity, as it came out of

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 294.
† Ibid. p. 301, 302.
‡ Ibid. p. 314.
§ Ibid. p. 316.

" the

"the hands of God, if I may uſe the expreſſion, was a moſt "ſimple and intelligible rule of belief, worſhip, and manners, "which is the true notion of a religion. As ſoon as men pre- "ſumed to add any thing of their own to it, the human alloy "corrupted the divine maſs, and it became an object of vain, "intricate, and contentious ſcience*." After having obſerved, that "the political views of Conſtantine, in the eſtabliſhment of "Chriſtianity, were to attach the ſubjects of the empire more "firmly to himſelf and his ſucceſſors, and the ſeveral nations "which compoſed it to one another, by the bonds of a religion "common to all of them; to ſoften the ferocity of the armies; "to reform the licentiouſneſs of the provinces; and by infuſing "a ſpirit of moderation, and ſubmiſſion to government, to ex- "tinguiſh thoſe principles of avarice and ambition, of injuſtice "and violence, by which ſo many factions were formed, and the "peace of the empire ſo often and ſo fatally broken;" he declares, that "no religion was ever ſo well proportioned, nor ſo "well directed, as that of Chriſtianity ſeemed to be, to all theſe "purpoſes." He adds, that "it had no tendency to inſpire that "love of the country†, nor that zeal for the glory and grandeur "of it, which glowed in the heart of every Roman citizen in "the time of the commonwealth: but it recommended what "Conſtantine liked better, benevolence, patience, humility, and "all the ſofter virtues‡." He alloweth, that "the goſpel is in "all caſes one continued leſſon of the ſtricteſt morality, of juſ- "tice, of benevolence, and of univerſal charity." He mentions "Chriſt's blaming his diſciples for being willing to call for fire "from heaven againſt the Samaritans: And that the miracles "wrought by him, in the mild and beneficent ſpirit of Chriſti- "anity, tended to the good of mankind§." He obſerves, that "the theology contained in the goſpel lies in a narrow compaſs. "It is marvellous indeed, but it is plain, and it is employed "throughout to enforce natural religion‖." After having ſaid, that "the articles of faith have furniſhed matter of contention in,

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 394, 395.

† That Chriſtianity tends to produce and promote a true love to our country, in that ſenſe in which it is properly a virtue, ſee above, vol. i. p. 59, 60, marg. note.

‡ Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 433. § Ib. p. 188, 189. ‖ Ib. p. 461.

" as well as from the apoſtolical age, and have added a motive to " that cruel principle, which was never known till Chriſtians " introduced it into the world, to perſecution even for opinions;" he adds, that " the charge which the enemies of religion bring " againſt Chriſtianity on this account is unjuſtly brought. Theſe " effects have not been cauſed by the Goſpel, but by the ſyſtem " raiſed upon it; not by the revelations of God, but by the in- " ventions of men *." He profeſſes a great concern for true Chriſtianity in oppoſition to theology, and ſays, that " genuine " Chriſtianity was taught of God †." And not to multiply paſſages for this purpoſe, he pronounces, that " the Chriſtian ſyſtem " of faith and practice was revealed by God himſelf, and it is " abſurd and impious to aſſert, that the divine *Logos* revealed it " incompletely or imperfectly. Its ſimplicity and plainneſs " ſhewed, that it was deſigned to be the religion of mankind, and " manifeſted likewiſe the divinity of its original ‡."

I have choſen to lay together theſe ſeveral paſſages relating to Chriſtianity in one view. And if we were to look no farther, we ſhould certainly entertain a very favourable opinion of Lord Bolingbroke's ſentiments with regard to the truth, the excellency, and divine original, of the goſpel of Jeſus.

I ſhall here ſubjoin ſome reflections which have occurred to me in reviewing theſe paſſages, and others of the like import, which are to be found in his Lordſhip's writings.

The firſt reflection is this: That there muſt certainly be a wonderful beauty and excellency in the religion of Jeſus, conſidered in its original purity and ſimplicity, which could force ſuch acknowledgments from a perſon ſo ſtrongly prejudiced againſt it, as his Lordſhip appears to have been. According to the repreſentation he himſelf has been pleaſed to make of it, it was a *moſt amiable* and *moſt uſeful* inſtitution, whoſe natural tendency was directed *to promote the peace and happineſs of mankind*. It contains *all the duties of natural religion*, and teaches them in *the moſt plain and ſimple manner*. It is *one continued leſſon of the ſtricteſt morality, of juſtice, of benevolence, and of univerſal charity:* and tends to extinguiſh thoſe *principles of avarice and*

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 313.
† Ibid. p. 349. See alſo vol. iii. p. 339. ‡ Ibid. p. 451.

ambition,

ambition, of injuſtice and violence, which have done ſo much miſchief in the world, and diſturbed the peace and order of ſociety. As its moral precepts are excellent, ſo its poſitive inſtitutions are not only *innocent* but *profitable*, and *extremely proper to keep up the ſpirit of religion*. He acknowledges, that, conſidered in its original ſimplicity, it was a *moſt ſimple and intelligible rule of belief, worſhip, and practice*: that the *theology contained in the Goſpel is marvellous, but plain*; and that the *ſyſtem of religion there taught* is a *complete ſyſtem, to all the purpoſes of religion natural and revealed*, and might have continued ſo, *to the unſpeakable advantage of mankind, if it had been propagated with the ſame ſimplicity with which it was taught by Chriſt himſelf*. I think it plainly follows from this repreſentation of the nature and tendency of the Chriſtian religion as taught by our Saviour and his apoſtles, that thoſe can in no ſenſe be regarded as real friends to mankind, who do what they can to ſubvert its authority, and thereby deſtroy its influence on the minds of men, and who by artful inſinuations, or even open attempts, endeavour to bring true original Chriſtianity into contempt; as it will appear this writer, notwithſtanding all his fair profeſſions, hath done.

Another reflection that may be made on Lord Bolingbroke's conceſſions is this: that he has in effect given up ſeveral objections which have been urged by the deiſtical writers, and on which great ſtreſs has been laid, and has acknowledged them to be of no force againſt the religion of Jeſus as laid down in the goſpel. It has been pretended, that Chriſtianity, or revealed religion, is not friendly to civil ſovereignty, or government; but he treats thoſe that make this objection, if deſigned againſt Chriſtianity as revealed in the Goſpel, and not merely againſt the duties that have been ſuperadded to it, as *falling below notice, and ſcarce deſerving an anſwer* *: And praiſes the policy of Conſtantine in endeavouring to eſtabliſh Chriſtianity as the religion of the empire, as being the beſt fitted of all religions to promote the public peace and order, to reform licentiouſneſs, to curb factions, and to infuſe a ſpirit of moderation, and ſubmiſſion to government. See the paſſages cited above from vol. iv. p. 282. 433.

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 300, 301.

Again, Chriſtianity or revealed religion hath been often objected againſt on account of its poſitive precepts, or inſtitutions, added to the law of nature. But his Lordſhip thinks "it may be "admitted, that things entirely and exactly conſiſtent with the "law of our nature may be ſuperadded to it by the ſame divine "authority, and that poſitive precepts may be given about things "which are indifferent by the law of our nature, and which "become obligatory as ſoon as they are enjoined by ſuch poſitive "precepts *." And particularly with regard to the poſitive inſtitutions of Chriſtianity, or the Chriſtian ſacraments, as enjoined in the goſpel, in their primitive ſimplicity, he acknowledges, in a paſſage above produced, that they were extremely proper to keep up the ſpirit of true religion, and to promote the obſervation of moral duties †.

Another objection which hath been urged againſt Chriſtianity, is drawn from that ſpirit of perſecution which hath obtained amongſt Chriſtians on account of opinions in religion. But he ſaith, that "the charge which the enemies of Chriſtianity bring "againſt it on this account is unjuſtly brought: that theſe ef"fects have not been cauſed by the goſpel, but by the ſyſtem "raiſed upon it; not by the revelations of God, but by the in"ventions of men." And he mentions Chriſt's blaming his diſciples for being willing to call for fire from heaven upon the Samaritans; and that all he inſtructed his apoſtles to do, even in caſes of the moſt enormous crimes, was to ſeparate ſinners from the communion of the faithful ‡.

There is no objection which hath been more frequently urged againſt the Chriſtian religion, than its teaching doctrines or articles of belief, that *reaſon neither could diſcover, nor can comprehend.* He aſſerts that there are articles or doctrines of this kind in the goſpel; but that they are *conciſely and plainly enough expreſſed in the original goſpel properly ſo called, which Chriſt taught, and which his four Evangeliſts recorded;* though they have been ſince *corrupted by theology* §. And ſpeaking of "rea"ſonable men who have received the Chriſtian revelation for

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 547.
† Ibid. vol. iv. p. 301.—See alſo ibid. p. 310, 311. 591.
‡ Ibid. vol. iv. p. 188, 189. 313. § Ibid. p. 294.

"genuine,

" genuine, after a ſufficient examination of the external and " internal proofs;" he ſays, " ſuch men having found nothing " that makes it inconſiſtent with itſelf, nor that is repugnant to " any of the divine truths which reaſon and the works of God " demonſtrate to them, will never ſet up reaſon in contradiction " to it, on account of things plainly taught, but incomprehen- " ſible as to their manner of being. If they did, their reaſon " would be falſe and deceitful; they would ceaſe to be reaſonable " men *." It is true that he elſewhere ſaith, that " if the things " contained in any revelation be above reaſon, *i. e.* incompre- " henſible, I do not ſay in their manner of being, for that alone " would not make them liable to objection, but in themſelves, " and according to the terms in which they are communicated, " there is no criterion left by which to judge whether they are " agreeable or repugnant to the religion of nature and of reaſon. " They are not therefore to be received †." But it is to be conſidered, that when divines talk of things above reaſon in the Chriſtian ſyſtem, all that they mean by it is, that they are things not contrary to reaſon, but as to the manner of them inconceivable, and according to his own conceſſion, it can be no objection againſt the truth or divinity of revelation, that it containeth an account of ſome things which are *incomprehenſible in their manner of being*.

Another reflection that is proper to be made upon what Lord Bolingbroke hath acknowledged with regard to the original Chriſtian revelation as laid down in the goſpel of Jeſus, is, that he hath on ſeveral occaſions ſeemed expreſsly and formally to own its divine original. In ſome of the paſſages above cited, he directly declares, that *genuine Chriſtianity was taught by God*—That the *Chriſtian ſyſtem of faith and practice was revealed by God himſelf*—And that *the firſt publiſher of Chriſtianity proved his aſſertions by his miracles*. To which I ſhall add another remarkable paſſage in the concluſion of his fourth Eſſay, which is *concerning authority in matters of religion*. " Chriſtianity," ſaith he, " genuine Chriſtianity, is contained in the goſpel: it is the word " of God; it requires therefore our veneration and ſtrict con-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 384.—See alſo p. 279.

† Ibid. vol. v. p. 546.

"formity to it*." He ought therefore, if he were conſiſtent with himſelf, on the authority of that revelation, to receive what is there plainly revealed concerning the moral attributes of God, concerning divine providence as extending to the individuals of the human race, concerning Chriſt's being the great mediator between God and man, and concerning our redemption by his blood, and concerning a ſtate of future rewards and puniſhments. And yet he hath endeavoured to ſubvert all theſe. Notwithſtanding his profeſſed regard for Chriſtianity, he hath on ſeveral occaſions uſed his utmoſt efforts to weaken or deſtroy the proofs of its divine original, to miſrepreſent and expoſe its doctrines and laws, thoſe doctrines which he himſelf declares to have been original doctrines of the Chriſtian religion. How far ſuch a conduct is conſiſtent with that truth and candour, that honeſty and ſimplicity of heart, which become a ſincere inquirer, and who declareth, that he hath nothing but truth in view, may be left to any fair and impartial perſon to determine.

In my reflections on this part of Lord Bolingbroke's works, the method I ſhall obſerve is this: I ſhall firſt conſider thoſe paſſages that ſeem deſigned to ſtrike at the authority of Chriſtianity in general; and then ſhall proceed to conſider the objections he hath urged againſt ſome particular laws and doctrines of our holy religion.

With regard to Chriſtianity in general, he runs a parallel, in the ſeventh and eighth of his Fragments and Eſſays, between the law of nature and Chriſtianity. He compares the clearneſs and certainty of the former with that of the latter. He compares alſo their ſanctions, and endeavours to ſhew, that the law of nature reſts on fuller proofs than any that have been found or can be given, of the divine inſtitution of Chriſtianity†. In all that he offers on this head, he goes upon the ſuppoſition of the abſolute clearneſs and certainty of the law of nature to the whole human race; and what he has urged to this purpoſe has been conſidered in my ninth letter. But it may be eaſily ſhewn, that the whole parallel he there draws between the law of nature and

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 631, 632.—See alſo ib. p. 279. and vol. iii. p. 339.

† Ibid. vol. v. p. 90. et ſeq.

Chriſtianity,

Chriſtianity, and between the proofs of the former and of the latter, is entirely impertinent. He himſelf there declares, that "every friend to Chriſtianity admits, that the Chriſtian law is "nothing elſe than the law of nature confirmed by a new reve-"lation, and that this is what the worſt of its enemies does not "deny, though he denies the reality of the revelation*." It is not true that the Chriſtian law is nothing elſe than the law of nature: but that it comprehends it, that it clears and enforces it, is very true. It does not take off from any rational argument or evidence brought in favour of that law, and beſides confirmeth it by an expreſs divine teſtimony. And muſt not common ſenſe lead every man to acknowledge, that it muſt be a mighty advantage to have the law of nature thus farther cleared and confirmed? The proofs therefore of Chriſtianity, and of the law of nature, are not to be oppoſed to one another. Both have a friendly harmony: and Chriſtians have the great advantage of having both theſe proofs in conjunction. Chriſtianity ſuppoſeth the law of nature, cleareth it where it was obſcured, enforceth it by the ſtrongeſt ſanctions, and addeth things which could not be known merely by that law, and which yet it was of importance to mankind to be acquainted with. So that Chriſtianity, as far as it relates to and republiſhes the law of nature, has all the advantages which this writer aſcribes to that law, becauſe it is that very law more clearly publiſhed, and ſtrongly confirmed: and in this reſpect there is no competition between them. And with reſpect to thoſe things in Chriſtianity which are not clearly comprehended in that law, and which we could not have diſcovered merely by our own unaſſiſted reaſon, it is not to be wondered at if they are not ſo obvious to our underſtandings: but as far as they are neceſſary to be known by us, they are revealed in the goſpel: and we are not obliged to believe them farther than they are there revealed. Nor ſhall thoſe be condemned for not believing them, who have had no opportunity of being acquainted with that revelation. Though our author, in order to caſt an odium on Chriſtianity, after having obſerved, that "the law of nature is "univerſally given to all mankind," adds, that "the greateſt "part of the world are invincibly ignorant of the firſt principles

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 93.

" of Chriſtianity, without the knowledge of which, and without " faith in which, they are all condemned to eternal puniſhment *."

We have ſeen that our author declareth Chriſtianity to be the law of nature enforced by a new revelation: ſo that according to this repreſentation, it is a *divine republication of the law of nature.* Yet he elſewhere thinks proper to repreſent it as only a *republication of the doctrines of Plato:* and any one that conſiders the repreſentation he hath frequently made of that philoſopher and his doctrines, muſt be ſenſible that this is far from being deſigned as a compliment to the Chriſtian revelation. Some account of his invectives againſt him was given in the fifth Letter. He calls him a *mad theologiſt:* And tells us, that no *man ever dreamed ſo wildly as Plato wrote:* And that he *introduced a falſe light into philoſophy, and oftener led men out of the way of truth than into it.* Yet he ſays, it is ſtrange to obſerve " the " ſtrange conformity there is between *Platoniſm* and *genuine* " *Chriſtianity* itſelf, ſuch as it is taught in the original goſpel. " We need not ſtand to compare them here. In general the " Platonic and Chriſtian ſyſtems have a very near reſemblance, " *qualis decet eſſe ſororum,* and ſeveral of the ancient fathers " and modern divines have endeavoured to make it appear ſtill " greater.—That this may give unbelievers occaſion to ſay that " if the doctrines are the ſame, they muſt have been deduced " from the ſame principle; and to aſk, what that principle was, " whether reaſon or revelation? If the latter, Plato muſt have " been illuminated by the Holy Ghoſt, and muſt have been the " precurſor of the Saviour, and of more importance than St. " John. He anticipated the goſpel on ſo many principal ar- " ticles of belief and practice, that unbelievers will ſay, it was a " republication of the theology of Plato: And that as the repu- " blication was by divine revelation, the publication muſt have " been ſo too: and they will aſk with a ſneer, whether a man, " whoſe paſſion for courtezans and handſome boys inſpired him " to write ſo many lewd verſes, was likely to be inſpired by the " Holy Ghoſt †?" This is mean banter, taking advantage of the too great admiration ſome particular perſons have expreſſed for Plato. But he has not traced the conformity between Platoniſm

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 91. † Ibid. vol. iv. p. 340.

and

and genuine original Chriſtianity, under pretence that it was needleſs. He owns, that Plato *blundered on ſome divine truths**: That on ſome occaſions he wrote *like a very pious and rational theiſt and moraliſt;* and that *very elevated ſentiments may be collected from his writings:* That there is in them *a mixture of the brighteſt truths, and the foulеſt errors*†. It is not to be wondered at therefore, that there was in ſeveral inſtances a conformity between the doctrine of Plato, and that of the goſpel. But he himſelf acknowledges, that there were many things in his ſcheme contrary to that of Chriſtianity. He ſays, that "ſome "of Plato's writings abound in notions that are agreeable to the "Chriſtian ſyſtem, and in others that are repugnant to it‡." That "far from going about to deſtroy the pagan ſuperſtition, "he refined it, and made it more plauſible, and more ſecure from "the attacks to which it was expoſed before§:" And that accordingly "Platoniſm anſwered the purpoſes of thoſe who op-"poſed Chriſtianity‖." I would only farther obſerve, that there is no writer whom he repreſents as ſo unintelligible as Plato; and yet he intimates, that if he had known and taught the peculiar doctrines of the goſpel, "he who is ſo often unintel-"ligible now would have been vaſtly more ſo, and leſs fitted "for the great work of reforming mankind**." This is a very odd inſinuation from one who has acknowledged, that true original Chriſtianity is a *plain and intelligible ſyſtem of belief and practice:* and that its *ſimplicity and plainneſs ſhewed, that it was deſigned to be the religion of mankind, and manifeſted likewiſe the divinity of its original.*

It may be looked upon as a farther proof of his regard to Chriſtianity, that he repreſents it as an inconſiſtent ſcheme. He pretends, that the New Teſtament conſiſteth of two goſpels, the one publiſhed by our Saviour himſelf, and recorded by the evangeliſts, and the other by St. Paul.

He obſerves, that "Chriſt was to outward appearance a Jew, "and ordered his diſciples to do what the ſcribes and phariſees "who ſat in Moſes's chair taught: and that when he commiſſioned

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 348.
‡ Ibid. p. 344, 345.
‖ Ibid. p. 359.
† Ibid. p. 345. 352.
§ Ibid. p. 355.
** Ibid. vol. v. p. 226.

"his

" his apoſtles to teach and baptize all nations, he only meant it " of the Jews diſperſed into all nations." He aſſerts, that " the " myſtery of God's taking the Gentiles to be his people without " ſubjecting them to circumciſion, or the law of Moſes, was in- " conſiſtent with the declarations and practice of Jeſus*." He aſks therefore, " if this was the purpoſe of God, to take the Gen- " tiles to be his people under the Meſſiah, how came it that the " Meſſiah himſelf gave no inſtructions about it to his apoſtles, " when he ſent them to preach his goſpel to all nations? Why " was the revelation of this important myſtery, ſo neceſſary at " the firſt publication of the goſpel, reſerved for St. Paul, who " had been a perſecutor? Shall we ſay, that this eternal purpoſe " of the Father was unknown to the Son? Or, that if it was " known to him, he neglected to communicate it to the firſt " preachers of the goſpel?" He ſeems to think theſe queſtions unanſwerable, and that " the *pertneſs* and *impudence* of the men " that pretend to account for theſe things *deſerve no regard*†." And yet it is no hard matter to ſolve theſe difficulties. The calling of the Gentiles was originally included in our Saviour's ſcheme. It was a remarkable part of the character of the Meſſiah, clearly pointed out in the prophetical writings, by many expreſs predictions. Our Lord himſelf, during his own perſonal miniſtry, gave plain intimations of his deſign that way, and after his aſcenſion into heaven inſtructed his apoſtles in it by his ſpirit, whom he ſent to guide them into all truth. And the gradual diſcovery of this, in a way fitted to remove their prejudices, was conducted with admirable wiſdom as well as condeſcenſion.

Mr. Chubb had inſiſted on this objection at great length; and I ſhall therefore refer to the remarks made upon that writer in the fourteenth Letter: yet, upon no better foundation than this, his Lordſhip hath taken upon him to affirm, that the " goſpel St. " Paul preached was contradictory to that of Jeſus Chriſt:" and that " he taught ſeveral doctrines, which were directly re- " pugnant to the word and example of the Meſſiah‡." And indeed our author hath on many occaſions diſcovered a particular prejudice againſt that great apoſtle. He calls him a *true cabba-*

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 305. † Ibid. p. 326.
‡ Ibid. p. 328.

liſtical

*liſtical architect**, a looſe paraphraſer and *cabbaliſtical commentator, as much at leaſt as any ancient or modern rabbi:* And that the different manner of his preaching the goſpel, and that of the other apoſtles, "marks ſtrongly the different ſchools in which "they had been educated, the ſchool of Chriſt, and the ſchool "of Gamaliel†." But nothing is more evident to every one that reads the New Teſtament with attention, than that there is a perfect harmony between St. Paul and the other apoſtles: and that the ſcheme of religion taught in the goſpels and in the epiſtles is every-where the ſame. Such a harmony there is, as ſhews they were all directed by the ſame ſpirit. The goſpel which St. Paul preached was what he received by revelation from Jeſus Chriſt, as he himſelf declares, Gal. i. 12. He had not learned it in the ſchool of Gamaliel. On the contrary, in that ſchool he had imbibed the ſtrongeſt prejudices againſt the religion of Jeſus, and which nothing leſs than a power of evidence, which he was not able to reſiſt, could overcome. He was very well verſed in the Jewiſh learning: yet none of the apoſtles ſo frequently warned the Chriſtian converts againſt the Jewiſh fables, or ſpeaks with ſuch contempt of their vain traditions, their endleſs genealogies, their ſtrifes and queſtions about words, as he has done.

There are ſeveral invidious charges brought by our author againſt this excellent perſon. He is pleaſed to repreſent him as a *looſe declaimer*, as a *vain-glorious boaſter*, as having been guilty of *great hypocriſy and diſſimulation* in his conduct towards the Jewiſh Chriſtians, as writing *obſcurely* and *unintelligibly*, and that where he is *intelligible*, he is *abſurd*, *profane*, and *trifling*‡. He particularly inſtances in his doctrine concerning predeſtination§; though he owns, that "this doctrine is very "much ſoftened, and the aſſumed proceedings of God towards "men are brought almoſt within the bounds of credibility, by "Mr. Locke's expoſition of the ninth-chapter of the epiſtle to "the Romans," which he calls a *forced one*, but offers nothing to prove it ſo; and acknowledges, that *this ſenſe might be admitted*‖. He alſo charges him with teaching paſſive obedience,

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 288. † Ibid. p. 327, 328.
‡ Ibid. p. 328. 330, 331. § Ibid. p. 331. 509. vol. v. p. 567.
‖ Ibid. p. 456.

and

and as *employing religion to ſupport good and bad governments alike* *: though any one that impartially conſiders the apoſtle's doctrine in the paſſage he refers to, *viz.* the thirteenth chapter of the Epiſtle to the Romans, will find it wiſe and excellent: Mr. Chubb had advanced the ſame charge, as well as moſt of the others that are produced by Lord Bolingbroke againſt that eminent apoſtle: and that I may not be guilty of needleſs repetitions, I ſhall refer to the remarks made on that writer in the fourteenth Letter.

His Lordſhip mentions that paſſage, 1 Cor. xi. 5. 14. about womens propheſying with their heads uncovered, and that it is a ſhameful thing for men to wear long hair, which he ſays, is the *moſt intelligible trifling that we find in the goſpel.* This is very improperly brought in by the author here, where he propoſes to ſhew that where St. Paul is not obſcure he is *profane* and *trifling*: for this is generally acknowledged to be one of the obſcureſt paſſages in St. Paul's Epiſtles. But this is no real objection againſt their authority. Some obſcure and difficult paſſages muſt be expected in the moſt excellent of ancient writings, eſpecially in things that have a ſpecial reference to the cuſtoms and uſages of thoſe times. He is pleaſed to ſay, that the *argument may not appear very concluſive, nor indeed very intelligible to us:* And if ſo, he has done wrong to produce it as an inſtance of *intelligible trifling:* But he ſneeringly adds, that *it was both*, he *doubts* not, to *the Corinthians.* And I doubt not they underſtood it better than we at this diſtance can pretend to. He then mentions the apoſtle's directions to the Corinthians with regard to the prudent and orderly exerciſe of thoſe ſpiritual gifts: and theſe directions cannot reaſonably be turned to the diſadvantage of the apoſtle, ſince they are undeniably wiſe and excellent.

Among other charges which Lord Bolingbroke bringeth againſt St. Paul, one is that of madneſs. He aſks, "Can he be leſs than "mad, who boaſts a revelation ſuperadded to reaſon to ſupply "the defects of it, and who ſuperadds reaſon to revelation to "ſupply the defects of this too at the ſame time? This is mad-"neſs, or there is no ſuch thing incident to our nature." And he mentions ſeveral perſons of great name as having been guilty

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 509. 516.

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of this madneſs, and particularly St. Paul *. That reaſon and revelation are in their ſeveral ways neceſſary, and aſſiſtant to each other, is eaſily conceivable, and ſo far from being an abſurdity, that it is a certain truth. But the ſtreſs of his Lordſhip's obſervation lies wholly in the turn of the expreſſion, and in the improper way of putting the caſe. That revelation may be of ſignal uſe to aſſiſt and enlighten our reaſon in the knowledge of things which we could not have known at all, or not ſo certainly, by our own unaſſiſted reaſon without it, is plainly ſignified by St. Paul, and is what the whole Goſpel ſuppoſes. And on the other hand it is manifeſt, that reaſon is neceſſary to our underſtanding revelation, and making a proper uſe of it; and that in judging of that revelation, and of its meaning and evidences, we muſt exerciſe our reaſoning faculties and powers: *i. e.* revelation ſuppoſeth us to be reaſonable creatures, and to have the uſe of our reaſon, and addreſſeth us as ſuch. But this doth not imply that revelation is defective, or that reaſon is ſuperadded to ſupply the defects of it. For let revelation be ever ſo ſufficient and perfect in its kind, or well fitted to anſwer the end for which it is given, yet ſtill reaſon is neceſſary to underſtand and apply it. This is St. Paul's ſcheme, and there is nothing in it but what is perfectly conſiſtent. It is evident from his writings, that he ſuppoſeth the revelation which hath been given to be ſufficient for all the purpoſes for which it was deſigned, able to make us wiſe unto ſalvation, and to inſtruct us in things of great importance, which reaſon, if left merely to itſelf, could not have diſcovered. And at the ſame time he ſuppoſeth thoſe to whom the revelation is publiſhed to be capable of exerciſing their reaſoning faculties, for examining and judging of that revelation, and exhorteth them to do ſo. And though he frequently aſſerteth his own apoſtolical authority, and the revelation he received from Jeſus Chriſt, yet he uſeth a great deal of reaſoning in all his Epiſtles. Thus are reaſon and revelation to be joined together, and are mutually helpful to one another. And in this view there is a real harmony between them. And what there is in this ſcheme that looks like madneſs, it is hard to ſee.

His Lordſhip, in his prejudice againſt St. Paul, carrieth it ſo far

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 171.

as

as to pronounce, "that St. Paul received nothing immediately "from Chriſt:" Though this apoſtle himſelf, in the paſſage before referred to, affirms, that he received the Goſpel he preached, *not of man, neither was he taught it, but by the revelation of Jeſus Chriſt.* He adds, that "St. Paul had no apoſtolical commiſ- "ſion, except that which he aſſumes in the Acts of the Apoſtles, "written by St. Luke, and dictated probably by himſelf*." And again, that "he entered a volunteer into the apoſtleſhip; at leaſt "his extraordinary vocation was known to none but himſelf." And if St. Paul dictated that account to St. Luke, it deſerves the greateſt credit, ſince he was the propereſt perſon in the world to give an account of it. But the truth of his apoſtolical commiſſion did not depend merely upon his own word. It was made manifeſt by the moſt illuſtrious proofs and credentials, to which he could with confidence appeal†, and was acknowledged by the other apoſtles, though this writer is pleaſed to inſinuate the contrary ‡. Indeed the plain meaning of his whole charge here is, that St. Paul was an impoſtor, and that his call to the apoſtolical office was entirely his own fiction. But the great abſurdity of this pretence has been ſo fully expoſed in Sir George Lyttleton's *Obſervations on the Converſion and Apoſtleſhip of St Paul*, that it is perfectly needleſs to add any thing farther on that head. I ſhall only obſerve, that whoſoever with a candid and unprejudiced mind conſiders the whole character and conduct of that great apoſtle, as repreſented in the Acts of the Apoſtles, and the temper and ſpirit which breathes in his admirable Epiſtles, will be apt to think that never was there among mere men a more perfect character than that of St. Paul. In him we may behold a ſhining example of the moſt exalted and unaffected piety towards God, the moſt fervent and active zeal for the divine glory, yet not a blind enthuſiaſtic heat, but a zeal according to knowledge, and conducted with great prudence: the moſt extenſive and diſintereſted charity and benevolence towards mankind, and the moſt earneſt and affectionate concern for their ſalvation and happineſs; the moſt ſteady fortitude and conſtancy under the ſevereſt trials and ſufferings, which he endured with patience,

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 388, 389. † 2 Cor. xii. 11, 12.
‡ Gal. xi. 7, 8, 9.

and

and even with joy, ſupported and animated by the earneſt deſire he had to ſerve the glorious cauſe of truth and righteouſneſs, and by the ſublime hopes of an everlaſting reward in a better world for his faithful ſervices in this. Never was there a truer greatneſs of mind than that which he manifeſted. And all this accompanied with a moſt amiable humility, and a great tenderneſs of ſpirit in bearing with the weakneſs and infirmities of others. He was a moſt glorious inſtrument in the hand of providence for promoting the ſacred intereſt of pure and undefiled religion in the world. Our author ſays, that Socrates was the *apoſtle of the Gentiles in natural religion*, as St. Paul was *in revealed*. But no inſtance can be brought of any one perſon whom the former converted from the prevailing polytheiſm and idolatry. And how ſhould this be expected, when he himſelf, as his Lordſhip owns, countenanced it by his own practice, and was *for the religion eſtabliſhed by the laws**! But the latter turned thouſands in many different nations from darkneſs unto light, and from ſerving idols to ſerve the living and true God, and from the moſt abandoned vice and diſſoluteneſs of manners to the practice of virtue and righteouſneſs; which he performed in oppoſition to the ſeemingly moſt inſuperable difficulties, and through a ſucceſſion of the greateſt labours and ſufferings that any one man ever endured. This has always highly recommended him to the eſteem and admiration of thoſe who have a zeal for true original Chriſtianity. And on the other hand, the enemies of our holy religion have always diſcovered a peculiar averſion to this excellent perſon, who was ſo ſucceſsful an inſtrument in propagating it. And this ſeems to be the true reaſon of that obloquy and reproach which Lord Bolingbroke has been ſo induſtrious to fix on ſo admirable a character.

His real intention towards Chriſtianity will farther appear, if we conſider the attempts he hath made to invalidate the proofs and evidences of it.

He frequently ſpeaks with the utmoſt contempt of thoſe that inſiſt upon the internal characters of a divine original, which are to be obſerved in the revelation delivered in the holy Scriptures. By rejecting the internal characters, he pretends to aſſert

* Bolingbroke's Works, iv. p. 193.

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the authority of the bible, and very gravely adviſes the divines to confine themſelves to the external proofs, and to dwell very little on the internal characters; and repreſents them as talking a great deal of blaſphemy on this head*. And yet he himſelf, as appears from ſome of the paſſages that have been above cited, has acknowledged ſeveral things with regard to Chriſtianity as taught in the goſpels, which have been deſervedly reckoned among the internal characters, which lead us to acknowledge that it came from God: ſuch as, the excellent tendency of its doctrines, precepts, and ſacraments; its being *one continued leſſon of the ſtricteſt morality, of juſtice, of charity, and univerſal benevolence;* its being *a complete ſyſtem, to all the purpoſes of religion natural and revealed;* its *plainneſs and ſimplicity, which*, he ſays, *ſhewed that it was deſigned to be the religion of mankind, and manifeſted likewiſe the divinity of its original.* It is true that he charges thoſe with *madneſs, and ſomething worſe than madneſs*, who, in arguing concerning the internal characters, "pretend to "comprehend the whole œconomy of the divine wiſdom from "Adam down to Chriſt, and even to the conſummation of all "things, and to connect all the diſpenſations." And this is one part of his quarrel with St. Paul, whom, as well as the divines, he very unfairly repreſents as undertaking to *ſhew the ſufficient reaſon of providence in every particular inſtance* from the beginning of the world to the end of it†. But however he is pleaſed to repreſent it, it is a noble contemplation, and highly for the honour of the ſacred writings, that there we may obſerve one and the ſame glorious plan carried on by the divine wiſdom and goodneſs from the beginning, for the recovery and ſalvation of lapſed man: ſucceſſive revelations communicated at different times and in divers manners, and at the diſtance of ſeveral ages from one another, yet all ſubſervient to the ſame glorious purpoſes, and mutually confirming and illuſtrating each other: the law and the prophets in their ſeveral ways conſpiring to prepare the way for the revelation of Jeſus Chriſt, and to furniſh divine atteſtations to it. The religion carried on under the ſeveral diſpenſations, ſtill for ſubſtance the ſame; and whatever ſeem-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 271, 272. vol. iv. p. 229.

† Ibid. vol. iii. p. 271, 272. vol. iv. p. 129.

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ing variety there may be in the parts, an admirable harmony in the whole.

His Lordſhip, ſpeaking of what he calls the *internal proofs* of the Chriſtian revelation, obſerves, in a ſneering way, that "the "contents of the whole Chriſtian ſyſtem laid down in our ſcrip-"tures are objects of ſuch a probability, as may force aſſent "very reaſonably in ſuch a caſe, without doubt; although a "concurrence of various circumſtances, improved by the cre-"dulity of ſome men, and the artifice of others, forced this aſſent "in caſes not very diſſimilar*." He has not thought fit to produce an inſtance of a falſe revelation, whoſe evidence can be juſtly compared to that of Chriſtianity. And as to his expreſſion of *forcing aſſent* by a *probability*, it is, like many others of his, very improper. No Chriſtian talks of forcing aſſent, nor would a forced belief have any great merit in it. But that there are ſufficient grounds to make it reaſonable to aſſent to it, is very true. And this is what his Lordſhip ought to have acknowledged, if, as he himſelf confeſſes, "it has all the proofs which the man-"ner in which it was revealed, and the nature of it, allowed "it to have†." This is in effect to own, that the proofs of Chriſtianity are ſufficient in their kind. And if this be the caſe, it is, according to the rule he himſelf has laid down, unreaſonable to demand more. For he obſerves, that "common ſenſe "requires that every thing propoſed to the underſtanding, ſhould "be accompanied with ſuch proofs as the nature of it can fur-"niſh. He who requires more, is guilty of abſurdity: he who "requires leſs, of raſhneſs‡."

With regard to the external proofs of Chriſtianity, his Lordſhip does not, as ſeveral of the deiſtical writers have done, deny miracles to be proper or ſufficient proofs. On the contrary, he ſometimes affects to cry up the mighty efficacy of miracles as alone ſufficient, without any conſideration of the goodneſs of the cauſe for which they were wrought, or examination of the doctrines they atteſt; and finds fault with "that maxim as con-"trary to common ſenſe, that is not for admitting miracles as "proofs of a divine original, without conſideration of the cauſe

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 93.
† Ibid. p. 91.
‡ Ibid. vol. iii. p. 246.

" or doctrines: ſince real miracles can be operated by no power " but that of God, nor for any purpoſe, by conſequence, but " ſuch as infinite wiſdom and truth direct and ſanctify *." Accordingly he declares, ſpeaking of the Chriſtian revelation, that " conſidering the glorious perſon by whom it was brought, and " the ſtupendous miracles that were wrought to confirm it, we " might be ready to conclude, that it muſt have forced conviction, " and have taken away even a poſſibility of doubt †." And he repeats it again, that " Chriſtianity was confirmed by miracles, " and the proof was no doubt ſufficient for the conviction of " all thoſe who heard the publication of this doctrine, and ſaw " the confirmation of it. One can only wonder that any ſuch " remained unconvinced ‡." His deſign was undoubtedly to inſinuate, that the miracles were not really wrought; becauſe, if they had been wrought, they muſt have convinced all thoſe that ſaw them. To talk of miracles as forcing conviction is to carry it to an unreaſonable extreme, as any man muſt be ſenſible, that conſiders human nature, and the mighty influence of prejudices, paſſions, and worldly intereſts. We have however his conceſſion, that miracles are ſufficient for convincing thoſe who ſaw them: and if ſo, they muſt be proportionably ſufficient for the conviction of thoſe who have a reaſonable ground of aſſurance, that theſe miracles were really wrought, though they were not themſelves eye-witneſſes of them. The original proof of Chriſtianity therefore was by his own account every-way ſufficient. The only queſtion that remains is, whether we have proper evidence to convince us that theſe miracles were actually performed. And of this we have evidence ſufficient to ſatisfy every candid and impartial enquirer, and all that could be reaſonably inſiſted upon in ſuch a caſe. For the proof of this I ſhall refer to what has been already obſerved in my fourth Letter, in anſwer to Mr. Hume.

The moſt remarkable of all the miracles by which the divine authority of the Chriſtian religion is confirmed, is the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt. And as to this, his Lordſhip obſerves, that " Chriſt ſcarce ſhewed himſelf to the few who were ſaid to have

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 227, 228. † Ibid. p. 461.
‡ Ibid. p. 91.

" ſeen

" ſeen him after his reſurrection in ſuch a manner, as they could " know by it certainly that it was he whom they had ſeen. I " ſay the few, becauſe St. Paul, who had not probably ever ſeen " Jeſus, deſerves no credit when he affirms againſt the whole " tenor of the goſpels, that he and above five hundred brethren " at once had ſeen him after his reſurrection." He has here plainly let us know, that after all his profeſſed regard to Chriſtianity, he is very willing to deny that which is the principal proof of our Saviour's divine miſſion, and to which he himſelf ultimately appealed as ſuch. But we have nothing but confident aſſertions, after his Lordſhip's manner, and a bold charging St. Paul with a falſehood, without the leaſt proof: for as to his pretence, that it is contrary to the whole tenor of the goſpels, there is no foundation for it. The more to expoſe St. Paul, he repreſents it as if he had affirmed, that he himſelf was preſent, and ſaw Jeſus at the ſame time that he was ſeen of five hundred brethren at once. Whereas he ſaith no ſuch thing, but rather the contrary, 1 Cor. xv. 6. 8. But as to Chriſt's being ſeen by ſo many perſons, St. Paul ſpeaks of it as a thing certainly known, and that the greater part of them were then alive when he wrote to the Corinthians. And the queſtion is, whether St. Paul is to be believed in a fact which he publicly affirmed in that very age, and for the truth of which he appeals to great numbers of perſons then living, or this writer, who, at the diſtance of ſeventeen hundred years, gives us his own word for it that there was no ſuch thing? But I ſhall not need to add any thing farther on this ſubject here, having conſidered it ſo fully in the twelfth Letter of the former volume, which contains remarks on *the Reſurrection of Jeſus conſidered.*

The accounts of the extraordinary facts whereby Chriſtianity was atteſted, as well as of its original doctrines, are tranſmitted to us in the ſacred writings of the New Teſtament, particularly in thoſe of the Evangeliſts, and in the Acts of the Apoſtles. And it has been often ſhewn, that never were there any writings which carry greater marks of purity, ſimplicity, and uncorrupted integrity, and of an impartial regard to truth, or which have been tranſmitted with a clearer and a more continued evidence. With regard to the writings of the Evangeliſts, Lord Bolingbroke hath himſelf acknowledged, that " it is out of diſpute, that we

" have in our hands the goſpels of Matthew and John, who gave " themſelves out for eye and ear-witneſſes of all that Chriſt did " and taught. That two channels were as ſufficient as four to " convey thoſe doctrines to the world, and to preſerve them in " their original purity. The manner too in which theſe Evan- " geliſts recorded them, was much better adapted to this purpoſe " than that of Plato, or even of Xenophon, to preſerve the " doctrines of Socrates. The Evangeliſts did not content them- " ſelves to give a general account of the doctrines of Jeſus Chriſt " in their own words, nor preſume in feigned dialogues to make " him deliver their opinions in his own name. They recorded " his doctrines in the very words in which he taught them, and " they were careful to mention the ſeveral occaſions on which " he delivered them to his diſciples or others. If therefore Plato " and Xenophon tell us with a good degree of certainty what " Socrates taught, the two Evangeliſts ſeem to tell us with much " more what the Saviour taught and commanded them to teach *." He finds fault indeed with Eraſmus for making Chriſt to ſay to his diſciples, in his paraphraſe on the firſt chapter of the Acts, that " the Holy Spirit would not only recal to their minds all he had " taught them, but ſuggeſt likewiſe unto them whatever it might " be neceſſary for them to know." And he adds, that " cavil- " lers will ſay that theſe words were added by Eraſmus to the " text for reaſons very obvious, and are not contained in the " text." But there is certainly very little ground for ſuch a cavil, ſince it appears from the ſacred text itſelf, that our Saviour did both promiſe to ſend his Spirit to *bring all things to their remembrance, whatſoever he had ſaid unto them*, and alſo to *lead* them into *all truth*, and inſtruct them in things in which he himſelf had not fully inſtructed them during his perſonal miniſtry, becauſe they were not then able to bear them. John xiv. 26. xvi. 12, 13, 14. And whereas he urgeth, that " if we do not " acknowledge the ſyſtem of belief and practice which Jeſus left " behind him to be complete and perfect, we muſt be reduced " to the greateſt abſurdity, and to little leſs than blaſphemy; and " that it muſt be otherwiſe ſaid, that he executed his commiſ- " ſion imperfectly †." It will appear, if the matter be rightly

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 390. † Ibid. p. 315, 316.

conſidered,

conſidered, that it was no way diſhonourable to our Saviour, that there were ſeveral things more explicitly revealed to the apoſtles afterwards, than was done during his perſonal miniſtry. Some things were not proper to be openly and diſtinctly publiſhed till after Chriſt's reſurrection: nor were his diſciples fully prepared for receiving them before that time. He himſelf told them before his paſſion, that there were ſome things they did not know then, but ſhould know afterwards. And the revelation publiſhed by his apoſtles, according to his commiſſion, and under the influence of his Spirit, and by power derived from him, was as truly *the revelation of Jeſus Chriſt*, as St. Paul calls it, as that which he delivered himſelf in the days of his perſonal miniſtry; nor did it really differ from it in any article, but more fully explained ſeveral things, than was ſeaſonable, or could be conveniently done, before. So that Chriſt was faithful to the commiſſion he had received, and the whole was conducted with admirable wiſdom, and condeſcending goodneſs.

Notwithſtanding the fair acknowledgment Lord Bolingbroke had made of the credibility of the Goſpels which are now in our hands, he hath thrown out ſeveral hints which are plainly deſigned to deſtroy the credit of them. Thus he talks of a multitude of different Goſpels which were compoſed in the firſt ages, he thinks, *no leſs than forty*—and aſks, "If the goſpels received "into the canon are favourable to the orthodox belief, how do "we know that the other goſpels were exactly conformable to "theſe?" He talks, as Mr. Hobbes had done before him, as if "the authenticity of the four Goſpels depended on the council "of Laodicea, which admitted four, and rejected the reſt:" and adds, "that every church judged of the inſpiration of authors, "and of the divine authority of books; and thoſe books were ca-"nonized, in which every particular church found the greateſt "conformity with their own ſentiments*." But this is very unfairly repreſented. There is nothing capable of a clearer proof, than that there was a general agreement in the churches throughout the world, from the firſt age of Chriſtianity, in receiving the four Goſpels, the Acts of the Apoſtles, and St. Paul's Epiſtles: and that the ſpurious goſpels he ſpeaks of were never

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 404, 405.

generally received in the Chriſtian church as of divine authority: and that the primitive Chriſtians were very careful and ſcrupulous not to receive any books into the ſacred canon, but thoſe of whoſe authority they had ſufficient proofs. Nothing can be more abſurd, and more contrary to plain undeniable fact, than to pretend that the ſacred books of the New Teſtament were not looked upon as authentic and divine before the council of Laodicea, which was not held till after the middle of the fourth century. They were not firſt made ſo by that council, which only declared what had been long before received as of divine authority in the Chriſtian church. I need not ſay any more upon this ſubject in this place, but ſhall refer to the fourth Letter of the firſt volume, which contains ſome account of Toland's *Amyntor*, and the anſwers that were made to it. To which may be added, what I have offered in the *Reflections on Lord Bolingbroke's Letters on the Study and Uſe of Hiſtory*, at the end of this volume.

In order to weaken the credit of the original ſacred records of the Chriſtian religion, his Lordſhip hath farther obſerved, that "in other hiſtorians, if the paſſages which we deem genuine "ſhould be ſpurious, if others ſhould be corrupted or interpo-"lated, and if the authors ſhould have purpoſely or through de-"ception diſguiſed the truth, or advanced untruth, no great hurt "could be done:" but that "in the Scripture, beſides all the "other circumſtances neceſſary to conſtitute hiſtorical probabi-"lity, it is not enough that the tenor of facts and doctrines be "true; the leaſt error is of conſequence." He produces two inſtances to prove it, neither of which relate to any Scripture expreſſions at all.—And then he adds, that "when we meet with "any record cited in hiſtory, we accept the hiſtorical proof, and "content ourſelves with it, of how many copies ſoever it be the "copy. But this proof would not be admitted in judicature, as "Mr. Locke obſerves, nor any thing leſs than an atteſted copy "of the record." And he thinks, that "if ſuch a precaution "be neceſſary in matters of private property, much more is it "neceſſary that we receive nothing for the word of God, that is "not ſufficiently atteſted to be ſo." He takes notice of what the reverend Dr. Conybeare, late Lord Biſhop of Briſtol, has ſaid in anſwer to this; of whom he ſpeaks with a reſpect which

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is extremely juſt, but which, conſidering his uſual manner of treating the Chriſtian divines, could ſcarce have been expected from him, towards one who had diſtinguiſhed himſelf in defending the Chriſtian cauſe. The anſwer of Dr. Conybeare which he refers to is this: "That the ground of this proceeding in civil cauſes ſeems to be, that the original record, or an atteſted copy, is capable of being produced; and that therefore to offer any diſtant proof might look as if ſome art were intended to corrupt matters, and diſguiſe the truth. But it is not in the nature of things poſſible to produce the originals or atteſted copies of the Scriptures." This appeareth to me to be a good obſervation. But his Lordſhip is not ſatisfied with it. He anſwers, that "the reaſon why the copy of a copy is refuſed in proof, is not ſolely becauſe the original or an atteſted copy may be had, but becauſe the proof would be too diſtant whether they could be had or no."—And he thinks "if the rule be thought reaſonable in the one caſe, it cannot be thought, without abſurdity, unreaſonable in the other.—However it happens, the want of an original or of an atteſted copy is a want of proof*." But it is not the want of any proof that can be reaſonably deſired, or that is poſſible to be had, or that is neceſſary in any caſes of the like kind. By the conſent of all mankind, there may be ſufficient evidence of the truth and authority of ancient writings to convince any reaſonable perſon, though neither the originals, nor any atteſted copies of the originals, be now remaining†. And the man would only render himſelf ridiculous that ſhould

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 272.

† How long the originals of the apoſtolic writings continued in the churches, we cannot take upon us certainly to determine. Whether the noted paſſage of Tertullian, in which he ſpeaks of the *authenticæ literæ apoſtolorum* as ſtill read in the apoſtolical churches, relateth to the original manuſcripts of the apoſtolic writings, or not, about which the learned are not agreed, it is very poſſible, and not at all improbable, that ſome of the originals might have continued to that time. And conſidering how long pieces of that kind may be preſerved, we are not removed at ſo vaſt a diſtance from the originals as may appear at firſt view. In the year 1715, when Cardinal Ximenes ſet forward the Complutenſian edition of the Scriptures, there were ſome manuſcripts made uſe of which were looked upon to be then twelve hundred years old. The famous Alexandrian manuſcript preſented by Cyrillus Lucaris to our King Charles I. though learned men are not quite agreed

ſhould reject them as unworthy of credit, and give no other reaſon for rejecting them, but the want of ſuch originals or atteſted copies. And why ſhould a condition be inſiſted on as neceſſary with regard to the Scriptures, which would be accounted abſurd to the laſt degree, if inſiſted on with regard to any other ancient writings whatſoever? To which it may be added, that when great numbers of copies are taken from an original, and got into many hands, and diſperſed into various parts, by comparing theſe copies there ariſes a ſtronger proof in the nature of things, to ſatisfy a reaſonable perſon, that thoſe writings have not been materially corrupted or falſified, than if there were only one ſingle copy remaining, though it ſhould be atteſted by a living witneſs to have been faithfully copied and compared with the original; which yet by the author's own acknowledgment would be ſufficient in a court of judicature. It is manifeſt, that there would be more room to ſuſpect a fraud or impoſition in this caſe than in the other. As to what he alleges, that it is of much greater importance to guard againſt any miſtakes in the word of God than in any thing that relates to matters of private property, and that therefore as great or even greater precautions are neceſſary with regard to the former than the latter, it muſt be acknowledged, that if the revelation were of ſuch a nature, that it conſiſted in a ſingle preciſe point, as often is the caſe of a deed to be produced in evidence in a court of judicature, where a ſingle expreſſion or clauſe may determine the whole, and gain or loſe the cauſe, there might be ſome pretence for inſiſting on the ſtricteſt nicety of proofs, even as to all the ſeveral particular clauſes and forms of expreſſion, becauſe a ſingle miſtake might be of the worſt conſequence, and defeat the deſign of the whole. But it is manifeſt this is not the caſe with regard to the revela-

about its age, is univerſally allowed to be of very high antiquity. Dr. Grabe thinks it might have been written about the latter end of the fourth century. Others, as Dr. Mill, ſuppoſe it was not written till near the end of the fifth century. If we take the latter computation, it may fairly be ſuppoſed, that there were at that time, *viz.* at the cloſe of the fifth century, copies two or hundred years old: and if the Alexandrian manuſcript was copied from one of this ſort, which is no unreaſonable ſuppoſition, this will bring us to the third or latter end of the ſecond century, when probably the very originals, or at leaſt ſeveral copies taken from the originals, were in being.

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tion contained in the holy ſcriptures. The doctrines there taught, the precepts there injoined, the promiſes there made, the important facts there related, are ſo often repeated and referred to, and placed in ſuch various lights, that nothing leſs than a general corruption, which could not have been effected, could defeat the deſign for which that revelation was given. If a particular paſſage was altered or interpolated, ſtill there would be many others to preſerve to us the ſubſtance of that revelation, and to prevent the wrong uſe that might be attempted to be made of ſuch a paſſage. There is not therefore ſo ſcrupulous a nicety and exactneſs required in this caſe as in the other. The divine wiſdom hath ſo ordered it, that the revelation was originally contained in ſeveral writings, publiſhed by different perſons, and copies taken of them at different times, all confirming one another, and which render a general corruption of that revelation impracticable. The account of the facts there given is not confined to one book, nor are the articles of religion there mentioned merely mentioned once for all, or drawn up in one form or ſyſtem; but the facts are ſo often referred to, and the articles or doctrines ſo often repeated, and delivered on ſo many different occaſions, that no miſtakes in particular paſſages, or in a particular copy or copies, could deſtroy the intent or uſe of the original revelation.

It is with the ſame view of weakening and invalidating the evidence of Chriſtianity, that his Lordſhip is pleaſed to obſerve what hath been often urged by others of the deiſtical writers before him, that "the external evidence of the Chriſtian revela-"tion is diminiſhed by time." This he repreſents as "ſo evi-"dent that no divines would be ſo ridiculous as to deny it*." And after ſeeming to grant, in a paſſage cited above, that the proof of Chriſtianity, by miracles, was ſufficient for the conviction of all thoſe who heard the publication of this doctrine, and ſaw the confirmation of it, he adds, that "this proof became in a little "time traditional and hiſtorical: and we might be allowed to "wonder how the effect of it continued and increaſed too, as "the force of it diminiſhed, if the reaſons of this phænomenon "were not obvious in hiſtory†." As he has not thought fit to mention thoſe reaſons, no notice can be taken of them. But

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 269, 270. † Ibid. vol. v. p. 91.

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he ought not to have repreſented it as a thing which is univerſally acknowledged, that the external evidence of Chriſtianity is diminiſhed by time. The abſurdity of that maxim, that the certainty and credibility of moral evidence is continually diminiſhing in proportion to the length of time, has been often expoſed; particularly by Mr. Ditton in his Treatiſe on the Reſurrection, part ii. The evidence of Chriſtianity hath in ſome reſpects increaſed inſtead of being diminiſhed, ſince the firſt publication of it; eſpecially the proofs ariſing from the wonderful propagation of the goſpel, contrary to all human appearance, notwithſtanding the amazing difficulties it had to encounter with; and from the accompliſhment of many remarkable predictions which they that lived in the firſt age of Chriſtianity could not ſee the completion of*. To talk of the proof's becoming *traditional* and *hiſtorical* may paſs with thoſe that govern themſelves by ſounds, as if the words *traditional* and *hiſtorical*, and *doubtful* and *uncertain*, were terms of the ſame ſignification; when every one knows that many facts come to us by tradition and hiſtory with ſuch an evidence, that no reaſonable man can doubt of them anymore than of what he hears or ſees. He pronounceth indeed, according to his manner, with a deciſive tone, that "it was not poſſible, "that traditions derived from the firſt and through the moſt "early ages of Chriſtianity, ſhould convey either facts or doc-"trines down with a due authenticity and preciſion, unleſs a "continued miracle had ſubſiſted to alter the nature of things, "and to produce effects repugnant to their cauſes†." This is very poſitively determined; but we have no proof of it but his own authority. And if it be underſtood not merely of facts or doctrines delivered down by oral tradition, which for the moſt part cannot be much depended upon, but of facts or doctrines contained in the ſacred writings, there is no real foundation for this aſſertion. We have proof ſufficient to convince any reaſonable perſon, as I ſhall hereafter ſhew ‡, that thoſe writings were publiſhed in the firſt age of the Chriſtian Church, whilſt the

* This is fully ſhewn by Mr. Le Moine on Miracles, p. 252—280.

† Ibid. vol. iv. p. 398.

‡ See Reflections on Lord Bolingbroke's Letters on the Study and Uſe of Hiſtory.

apoſtles

apoſtles, and their immediate companions, the firſt publiſhers of Chriſtianity, were yet alive. In which age, if any had attempted to corrupt thoſe writings in the accounts of doctrines and facts, ſuch an attempt muſt have been unavoidably detected and expoſed. And in the age immediately ſucceeding, thoſe writings became ſo generally diſperſed and known, ſo many copies of them were taken, and ſpread through different countries, they were had in ſuch veneration among Chriſtians, and ſo conſtantly read in their religious aſſemblies, that a general corruption of them would have been an impoſſible thing. Nor can any time be fixed upon from that age to this, in which ſuch a general corruption of them could have been accompliſhed: and all attempts to prove ſuch a corruption have been evidently vain and ridiculous, and have turned only to the confuſion of thoſe who have pretended it. As to what he urges about the falſe apoſtles and teachers in the firſt age, and their high pretenſions to revelations and extraordinary gifts, and the many ſects which were then formed; and that though the apoſtles oppoſed them, "it was "often without effect, and always with great difficulty, as we "may judge by that which St. Paul had to maintain his authority "in the church of Corinth, and others*;" this is ſo far from diminiſhing the original evidence of Chriſtianity, that it rather confirms it. Since the evidence brought for the true Chriſtian religion by the apoſtles and firſt publiſhers of it, muſt have been exceeding ſtrong and cogent, and their authority, which had nothing but the force of truth, and the atteſtations given to their divine miſſion, to ſupport it, muſt have been on a very ſolid baſis, which was able to overcome all thoſe complicated difficulties, ariſing from open enemies without, Jews and heathens, and from falſe brethren within, and the ſcandals and offences of the ſeveral ſects which ſprung up under various leaders, ſome of them perſons of great parts and ſubtilty, and who put on very ſpecious appearances. What ſtrong proofs of a divine original, and what a mighty energy muſt have accompanied genuine primitive Chriſtianity, by which it triumphed over all the apparently inſuperable difficulties and oppoſitions of all kinds, which it had to encounter with, even at its firſt appearance!

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 398.

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The propagation and eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity, taking it in all its circumſtances, is indeed a moſt aſtoniſhing event, and has been always juſtly regarded as furniſhing an argument of great weight to prove its divine original, and the truth of the extraordinary facts and atteſtations by which it was confirmed. Lord Bolingbroke was ſenſible of this, and therefore has done what he could to take off the force of it, by endeavouring to account for the ſpreading of Chriſtianity without any thing extraordinary or ſupernatural in the caſe. To this purpoſe he obſerves, that "indulgence to the Jews and to the Gentiles, in order to gain "both, was a fundamental principle of apoſtolical conduct from "the firſt preaching of the Goſpel: and that by ſuch prudent "conduct the Goſpel was ſucceſſively propagated, and converts "flocked apace into the pale of Chriſtianity from theſe different "and oppoſite quarters*." He treats this, as if it were a piece of political conduct in St. Paul and the other apoſtles, in which they deviated from the original plan laid down by our Saviour himſelf. But this is a great miſtake. The taking the Jews and Gentiles into the Chriſtian Church, and uniting them both into one body, was part of the original plan of Chriſtianity, which was evidently deſigned by the great Author of our holy religion, in accompliſhment of the glorious ſcheme formed by the divine wiſdom from the beginning, and which had been clearly pointed out in the ancient prophecies. But ſo far was the indulgence ſhewn to the Gentiles, and the incorporating them into the Chriſtian Church along with the Jews, from helping to bring the Jews into it, that it was one of the greateſt obſtacles to their entering into the pale of Chriſtianity, and raiſed in them ſtrong prejudices againſt it, which had ſo far poſſeſſed the minds even of the apoſtles, that it was with great difficulty, and by degrees, that they themſelves were brought to embrace this part of the Chriſtian ſcheme. Nor can it be ſuppoſed that St. Paul, who had been educated in the ſchool of Gamaliel, and in the ſtricteſt Phariſaical notions, for which he was extremely zealous, would of himſelf have ever formed ſuch a ſcheme, in oppoſition to all his prejudices, if it had not been, as he himſelf affirms, communicated to him by a divine revelation, which

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 316.

came

came to him with an evidence that abſolutely convinced him, and overpowered all his prejudices.

With regard to the Gentiles, the taking them into the Chriſtian Church was only an admitting them into the body of thoſe who profeſſed the belief and acknowledgment of a crucified Saviour. And what was there in this to allure or engage them to forſake their ancient religion, and thoſe ſuperſtitions and idolatries to which they were ſo ſtrongly addicted? To tell the Jews, that they ſhould form one Church with the Gentiles, whom they looked upon with diſdain, as utterly unworthy of ſuch a privilege: and to tell the Gentiles, that they ſhould form one Church with the Jews, for whoſe *religion and nation*, his Lordſhip obſerves, that they had a *contempt and averſion*: and that they ſhould with them be reckoned among the diſciples of a crucified Jeſus, *i. e.* of a Jew that had been put to a cruel and ignominious death by the heads of his own nation, and whom they were to acknowledge for their Saviour and their Lord; could this poſſibly have been an inducement either to Jews or Gentiles to embrace Chriſtianity, which was ſo oppoſite to the prejudices of both, if it had not been for the conſpicuous evidences of a divine atteſtation accompanying it?

Another way he takes of accounting for the propagation of Chriſtianity is this: that "no ages nor countries could be more "prepared to adopt every theological and metaphyſical notion, "even the moſt extravagant and leaſt intelligible, than that "wherein the Chriſtian religion was firſt publiſhed and propa-"gated *." And he frequently intimates, that the heathen philoſophy, eſpecially the Platonic, had greatly helped forward the ſpreading of the Chriſtian faith. If this had been the caſe, one would have expected, that the chief harveſt of converts to Chriſtianity, at its firſt appearance, would have been among the philoſophers and metaphyſicians, and thoſe who were bred up in their ſchools. But it is evident the fact was otherwiſe. No perſons were more generally averſe to the Chriſtian ſcheme, than the ſeveral ſects of philoſophers in the heathen world, who oppoſed it with all the learning and ſubtilty they were maſters of. And indeed it was in ſome of its fundamental prin-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 337.

ciples,

ciples, directly oppoſite to their favourite notions and prejudices. Nor could it be expected, that they who valued themſelves ſo highly upon their learning, wiſdom, and eloquence, would ſubmit to be the diſciples of a crucified Jeſus, or learn their religion from ſuch perſons as the apoſtles were. The doctrine of ſalvation through Chriſt crucified, was *fooliſhneſs* to the proud Greeks, who pretended to ſeek *after wiſdom*, and was not agreeable to any of their ſchemes. And ſo far was St. Paul, the moſt learned of the apoſtles, from blending the Pagan philoſophy with the Chriſtian ſyſtem which he preached, that he thought it neceſſary to warn the Chriſtian converts againſt it. *Beware leſt any man ſpoil you through philoſophy and vain deceit*, Col. ii. 8.

Another thing he mentions as having been a great advantage to the propagation of Chriſtianity was, that "great collections were "made, and every Church had a common purſe. By theſe "means they ſupported their poor; and every man who embraced "Chriſtianity being ſure not to want bread, the Goſpel was "more effectually propagated, and great numbers of the loweſt "rank of people were brought into the pale*." One would be apt to think by his repreſentation, that the Chriſtians were for taking in all the poor that offered themſelves, idle perſons who only wanted to be maintained, in order to gain a number of converts and proſelytes. But this is a very wrong repreſentation. Every one knows, that great care was taken in the admitting perſons into the Chriſtian Church. They were to have a good aſſurance both of their faith and of their morals. No idle poor were to be ſupported. On the contrary, they were diſcountenanced, and were treated as perſons that *walked diſorderly*. It was a conſtitution eſtabliſhed by apoſtolical authority as in the name of Chriſt, that if *any would not work, neither ſhould he eat;* and that every man ſhould *work with quietneſs*, and *eat his own bread;* and that he ſhould *labour, working with his hands that which is good, that he might have to give to him that needeth*, 2 Theſ. iii. 10, 11, 12. Eph. iv. 28. That ſpirit of charity and brotherly love which prevailed among the firſt Chriſtians, was a noble effect of the Goſpel of Jeſus; and that which ſo opened their hearts and hands was the full

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 422.

conviction

conviction and perſuaſion they had of the truth and divinity of our holy religion. Thus *faith worked by love.* As to the reflections he makes upon their ſelling their poſſeſſions, and laying the money at the apoſtles' feet, from whence he concludes, that *leſs than the whole would not ſatisfy the Church*, this and the caſe of *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, are conſidered in the remarks on Chubb's poſthumous works in my firſt volume, p. 257. *et ſeq.* to which I chuſe to refer rather than be guilty of unneceſſary repetitions.

It is a topic often inſiſted upon by the deiſtical writers, that revealed religion, particularly the Chriſtian revelation, has been of little or no advantage for promoting the reformation of mankind. Lord Bolingbroke ſeems to lay a particular ſtreſs upon this. He ſays, "It may be a full anſwer to all that Dr. Clarke "had advanced againſt the heathen philoſophers, and their be-"ing ſufficient for the inſtruction and reformation of mankind, "to aſk, Whether that reformation which the heathen philoſo-"phers could not bring about effectually, has been effected under "the Jewiſh or Chriſtian diſpenſation *?" What he ſaith concerning the effects of the Jewiſh diſpenſation hath been above conſidered; I ſhall here take notice of what he hath obſerved with regard to the effects of Chriſtianity. He aſſerteth, that "the world hath not been effectually reformed, nor any one "nation in it, by the promulgation of the Goſpel, even where "Chriſtianity flouriſhed moſt †." And after mentioning the Chriſtian martyrs and ſaints, of whom he frequently ſpeaks with great contempt, he obſerves, that "as to holineſs and auſterity "of life, that of particular men, or of ſome particular orders "of men, will be far from proving the reformation of the world "by Chriſtianity; ſince there were formerly among the hea-"thens, Chaldeans, Gymnoſophiſts, and are now among them and "the Mahometans, inſtances of as great or greater auſterity ‡." But he has not fairly repreſented the argument brought to prove the reformation of the world by Chriſtianity. In order to judge of this, it is neceſſary to conſider the ſtate of the world when Chriſtianity firſt appeared. Not only were the nations univerſally involved in the groſſeſt polytheiſm and idolatry, but never

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 256. † Ibid. p. 258.
‡ Ibid. p. 261. et ſeq.

was

was there an age more immerſed in vice, and all manner of wickedneſs. The picture St. Paul draws of it, Rom. i. 21. 32. ſhocking as it ſeems to be, is a very juſt repreſentation of the general ſtate of the heathen world. But in proportion as the goſpel prevailed, many myriads were *turned from idols to ſerve the living and true God*, brought from the moſt ſtupid idolatry to the pure adoration of the Deity, and from the moſt abominable vices to the practice of virtue and righteouſneſs. He himſelf acknowledges, that "our Saviour at his coming found the whole world in "a ſtate of error concerning the firſt principle of natural religion, "*viz.* the unity and perfections of God, though not of abſolute "darkneſs; and that the ſpreading of Chriſtianity has 'contri-"buted to deſtroy *polytheiſm* and *idolatry* *." And he obſerves that "Euſebius, in the firſt book of his evangelical preparation, "has given a long catalogue of abſurd laws and cuſtoms, con-"tradictory to the law of nature in all ages and countries, for a "very good purpoſe, to ſhew in ſeveral inſtances, how ſuch laws "and cuſtoms as theſe have been reformed by the Goſpel †." He takes notice indeed of the faults there were among the Chriſtian converts, for which the apoſtle reproves them; but it is manifeſt from many paſſages in the New Teſtament, that wonderful was the reformation which was then wrought in the religion and manners of men ‡." The primitive Chriſtians were, taking them generally, the moſt pious and virtuous body of men that ever appeared in the world. And though ſometimes the ancient Chriſtian writers, in the ardour of their zeal, complain of the corruption and degeneracy that are growing among them, as Cyprian particularly has done, eſpecially in his book *De Lapſis*, whoſe teſtimony our author more than once refers to, yet it appeareth from many paſſages in their writings, that the body of the Chriſtians was then remarkably diſtinguiſhed by the purity of their lives and manners from the Pagans. One of the topics they conſtantly inſiſt upon in their writings againſt the heathens, and in their apologies for Chriſtianity, is the mighty change that it wrought in the lives and manners of thoſe who embraced it.

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 243. † Ibid. vol. v. p. 100.

‡ See 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11.—Eph. iv. 18. 24.—Gal. v. 24.—1 Theſ. i. 3. 9, 10.—Col. i. 6.—1 Pet. iv. 3, 4.

And

And though his Lordſhip banters Lactantius for the challenge he makes, in a paſſage to which Dr. Clarke refers, yet this I think may be plainly concluded from it; that the good effects wrought by the Chriſtian religion, in reforming thoſe who were converted to it, were ſo manifeſt, that their adverſaries themſelves were not able to deny it. And accordingly we have expreſs teſtimonies of pagan writers to this purpoſe. That of Pliny is very remarkable, and well known. And even Julian, notwithſtanding all his prejudices, in his Epiſtle to Arſacias, recommends the purity and charity of the Chriſtians, and of their prieſts, to the imitation of the Pagans, and repreſents it as one cauſe of the progreſs Chriſtianity had made: though no doubt they were then degenerated from what they had been in the firſt ages. As to the preſent ſtate of the Chriſtian world, his Lordſhip thinks, "it "will not be ſaid, that luxury and debauchery have been re- "ſtrained by Chriſtianity. Where is the court or city in which "Chriſtianity is profeſſed, to which that phraſe might not be "applied, *Daphnicis moribus vivere?*" But there needs little obſervation to convince us, that the corruption and diſſoluteneſs he ſpeaks of is chiefly to be found among thoſe who have little more of Chriſtianity than the name, and who are in reality indifferent to all religion. And if the reſtraints of the Chriſtian religion were removed, the corruption would certainly be much greater and more general than it is. Many thouſands, who would otherwiſe be very corrupt and diſſolute, are engaged by the motives and precepts of Chriſtianity to lead a ſober, righteous, and godly life. A real Chriſtian walking according to the rules of the Goſpel, and I doubt not that, notwithſtanding the corruption complained of, there are ſtill great numbers of ſuch, forms a far more complete and excellent character for virtue, taken in its juſt extent, as comprehending rational piety and devotion, an extenſive benevolence, and exemplary purity of manners, than is to be found among the moſt admired Pagans. And indeed Chriſtians are taught to keep themſelves pure from ſeveral practices which the heathens ſcarce looked upon to be any crimes at all. As to what he mentions of the *cruel wars, perſecutions, and maſſacres*, among Chriſtians, he himſelf acknowledges, that *no part of this ought to be aſcribed to the*

Goſpel, nor can be *reconciled to the principles of it* *. The moſt effectual way therefore of promoting real piety, virtue, and charity, would be to endeavour to engage men to a cloſer adherence to the doctrines and laws of Chriſtianity, and, inſtead of ſetting them looſe from its ſacred reſtraints, to enforce its important motives upon their hearts and conſciences.

I need not take any particular notice of what his Lordſhip hath offered againſt the Chriſtian revelation, drawn from its not having been univerſally publiſhed in all nations and ages †. The chief force of what he hath urged depends upon this ſuppoſition, that, according to the goſpel, all thoſe ſhould be damned, that do not believe in Chriſt, whether they ever heard of him or not, *damned*, as he expreſſes it, *even in their involuntary ignorance* ‡; which is expreſsly contrary to the tenor of St. Paul's reaſoning in the ſecond chapter of the Epiſtle to the Romans. The declarations made in the goſpel of the neceſſity of believing in Chriſt, and the puniſhment of thoſe who do not believe, plainly relate to thoſe who have an opportunity of being acquainted with the Chriſtian revelation. I ſhall only farther obſerve, that whereas it has been often urged by the advocates for Chriſtianity, that it appears from the analogy of the divine procedure, that God may, in a conſiſtence with his wiſdom and goodneſs, grant to ſome men and ſome nations much greater helps and means for knowledge and moral improvement than to others, our author hath no way of avoiding this, but by boldly aſſerting, in contradiction to manifeſt fact and experience, that all men have the *ſame means* §; which is akin to another extraordinary aſſertion of his, that *there never was a time when it could be juſtly ſaid, that the law of nature was imperfectly known* ‖: though he himſelf frequently repreſents the greater part of mankind as having been ignorant for many ages together of what he owns to be the great fundamental principle of that law. And it is to be obſerved, that after having ſaid, in the paſſage juſt now referred to, that all men have the *ſame means*, he ſoon after declares, that "they "ſhall be accountable for no more than they had capacities or

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 264.

† Concerning this objection, ſee the firſt volume, p. 20.

‡ Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 295. § Ib. p. 294. ‖ Ib. p. 202.

"means

"means of knowing:" which plainly ſuppoſes that they all have not the ſame means and advantages, but that there will not be as much required of thoſe who had leſs advantages, as of thoſe who had greater; which the friends of the Chriſtian revelation will readily allow.

I ſhall conclude this letter with mentioning a paſſage, which is undoubtedly intended by the author to expoſe Chriſtianity. He obſerves, that "natural law is founded in reaſon; but Chriſtianity is founded in faith; and faith proceeds from grace; "and whether a man ſhall have grace or no, depends not on "him *." This is a way of talking uſual with thoſe who laugh both at faith and grace. His Lordſhip is pleaſed on ſome other occaſions to make mention of divine grace; but always in a way of ridicule. The notion of divine aſſiſtance has nothing in it but what is agreeable to reaſon, and to the ſentiments of ſome of the beſt and wiſeſt men in all ages. And he himſelf, even where he treats it as a vain and groundleſs notion, yet thinks fit to own, that our not being able to explain how it operates, is no juſt objection againſt it; and that a well-atteſted revelation is a ſufficient ground for believing that ſuch a thing there is †. And to our unſpeakable ſatisfaction we are aſſured by the Chriſtian revelation, that God is ready on his part to communicate his gracious aids to thoſe that humbly apply to him for them, and are at the ſame time diligent in the uſe of their own endeavours. This writer here ſuppoſes faith to be oppoſed to reaſon; and that Chriſtianity is not founded on reaſon, but on faith as oppoſed to it. But faith, if it be of the right kind, always ſuppoſes that there is a good reaſon for believing. We are not to believe without reaſon, nor againſt it. Chriſtianity is founded on rational evidence. The proof of the Chriſtian law, ariſing both from the external evidences and atteſtations given to it, and from the internal characters of goodneſs and purity, and the excellent tendency of the whole, is ſuch as is proper to convince the reaſon and judgment: and it has actually had that effect upon many of the ableſt perſons in all ages, ever ſince it was firſt promulgated.

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 93. † Ibid. vol. iii. p. 488.

LETTER XXXII.

Objections againſt the Laws and Doctrines of Chriſtianity conſidered—The Scripture Precepts not delivered in a formal Code or Syſtem, but in a Way that is really more uſeful; and they comprehend all the Duties of Morality—Concerning our Saviour's Precepts in his Sermon on the Mount—The Goſpel-Law with reſpect to Polygamy and Divorces not contrary to Reaſon and Nature, but wiſe and excellent—The Chriſtian Doctrine of a Mediator, and of our Redemption by the Blood of Chriſt, vindicated againſt his injurious Repreſentation of it—It gives worthy Ideas of God, and ſhews the divine Perfections in their proper Harmony—It is full of Comfort to good Men, but gives no Encouragement to the obſtinately wicked and preſumptuous—It is not contrary to Reaſon, though it could not have been diſcovered by it—This Doctrine not owing to the Pride of the human Heart—Traces of the Doctrine of the Trinity to be found, according to Lord Bolingbroke, in all the ancient theiſtical Philoſophers.

SIR,

HAVING in my laſt Letter conſidered what Lord Bolingbroke hath offered with regard to the Chriſtian revelation in general, and its evidences, I now proceed to examine his objections againſt the laws and doctrines of Chriſtianity.

With reſpect to the laws of Chriſtianity, he obſerves, that "Chriſt did not reveal an entire body of ethics—That the goſpel "does not contain a code reaching to all the duties of life—That "moral obligations are only occaſionally recommended—And "that if all the precepts ſcattered about through the whole New "Teſtament were collected and put together in the very words "of the ſacred writers, they would compoſe a very ſhort as well "as unconnected ſyſtem of ethics: and that a ſyſtem thus col-"lected from the writings of heathen moraliſts would be more "full,

" full, more entire, and coherent*." But it muſt be conſidered, that the New Teſtament ſuppoſes and confirms the authority of the Old. And out of both together might be compiled a much more complete body of ethics, than out of all the writings of the ancient philoſophers and moraliſts, which would be found defective in ſome duties of great conſequence, as was obſerved before, letter XXVII. p. 58, &c. They are not indeed delivered in a philoſophical way, and Lord Bolinbgroke himſelf owns, that " this does not take off from the dignity, the authority, or the " utility, even in moral doctrines, of revealed religion.—Since " revelation was not given to convince men of the reaſonableneſs " of morality—by arguments drawn from the reaſon of things— " but to enforce the practice of it by a ſuperior authority †." They are urged in the name of God, and as his laws. They are not wrought up into a formal code, and delivered merely once for all in a ſyſtem: but they are delivered in various ways, and on different occaſions, often in plain and expreſs precepts, at other times by alluſions, parables, and compariſons, recommended by excellent examples, and enforced by motives of the higheſt importance, by divine promiſes and threatenings. And what ſhews their great uſefulneſs and excellence, though they ſeem to be delivered occaſionally, yet it is ſo ordered, that not one duty of conſequence is omitted in the holy ſcriptures. All the duties of morality are there frequently repeated and inculcated, and variouſly enforced.

His Lordſhip owns, that " our Saviour's ſermon on the mount " contains, no doubt, many excellent precepts of morality." And if ſome of them ſeem too ſublime, he thinks the ſame reaſon may be given for them that Tully gives for the ſeverer doctrines of the Stoics. That " men will always ſtop ſhort of that pitch " of virtue which is propoſed in them; and it is therefore right " to carry the notions of it as high as poſſible," p. 298, 299. Some have objected it as an inſtance of our Saviour's carrying things to an exceſſive rigour, that he not only forbids *murder*, but the being *angry without a cauſe*; and not only prohibits the groſs act of *adultery*, but hath declared, that *whoſoever looketh on a woman, to luſt after her, hath already committed adultery with*

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 297. † Ibid.

her in his heart. Mat. v. 28. But his Lordſhip acknowledgeth, that the law which forbids the commiſſion of a crime, does certainly imply, that we ſhould not deſire to commit it; and that to want or extinguiſh that deſire is the beſt ſecurity of our obedience*. Yet he afterwards obſerves, that ſome of Chriſt's precepts "were fit and proper enough for a religious ſect or order "of men," like the Eſſenes, and might be properly enough exacted from thoſe who were Chriſt's companions, and diſciples in "a ſtricter ſenſe: but, conſidered as general duties, are impracticable, inconſiſtent with natural inſtinct as well as law, and "quite deſtructive of ſociety†." It is acknowledged, that ſome of Chriſt's precepts were not deſigned to be of univerſal obligation at all times, and to all his diſciples, but were directed to particular perſons, and were only to take place on extraordinary occaſions. Such was that which he mentions of ſelling all and following Chriſt. But it does not appear, that in any of our Saviour's precepts he had any view to the Eſſenes, who are not once mentioned in the whole goſpel. But as to other precepts which this writer mentions, and which are contained in the ſermon on the mount, and directed to all the diſciples, as that concerning the not reſiſting evil, the taking no thought for the morrow, the laying up treaſures, not on earth, but in heaven; theſe precepts, which are delivered in a conciſe proverbial way, taken in the true ſenſe and intention of them, are of great and general uſe, as deſigned to reſtrain a malevolent revengeful ſpirit, anxious diſtracting cares, and an inordinate love of worldly riches. Theſe and other precepts Mr. Chubb had endeavoured to expoſe, and I ſhall refer to the remarks that are made in the beginning of the fourteenth Letter, vol. i.

Among the precepts of Chriſtianity may be reckoned thoſe relating to polygamy and divorces. Our author looks upon a prohibition of polygamy to be a prohibition of what the law of nature permits in the fulleſt manner, and even requires too on ſeveral occaſions: concerning which ſee what was obſerved above, Letter XXVI. As to divorces, he declares, that "with "them monogamy may be thought a reaſonable inſtitution: "without them it is an unnatural, abſurd, and cruel impoſition;

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 298, 299. † Ibid. p. 300.

"that

" that it croſſes the intention of nature, and ſtands in oppoſition " to the moſt effectual means of multiplying the human ſpecies*." He ſeems very much to approve the law of Moſes for allowing polygamy and divorces, and to think it in this inſtance much more reaſonable and conformable to the law of nature than Chriſtianity is. But he has not fairly repreſented the Moſaical doctrine concerning divorces. He ſays, " the legal cauſes for di- " vorces had a great latitude," among which he reckons this for one, " becauſe the huſband found another woman whom he " thought handſomer, or whom it was more convenient for him " to marry †." Where he repreſents it, as if theſe were *legal cauſes of divorce, i. e.* cauſes ſpecified in the original law itſelf: which is not true. It was only a corrupt gloſs of ſome of the Jewiſh doctors, who in this as well as other inſtances perverted the deſign of the original law. There is no expreſs mention of divorces in the Jewiſh ſacred hiſtory, after the law made concerning this matter, till they are occaſionally mentioned by Iſaiah and Jeremiah. In the latter times of the Jewiſh ſtate, divorces ſeem to have been more frequent, and for ſlighter cauſes: though even then there were many among the Jews, who oppoſed the looſe interpretation of that law given by others of their doctors. This writer mentions " the differences between the ſchools of " Hillel and Sammeas about divorces: and that Chriſt decided in " favour of the latter, and ſpecified but one kind of turpitude as " a juſt cauſe of divorce ‡." And in this he plainly lets us know he thinks our Saviour was in the wrong. And he goes on to ſay in a ſneering way, that " the law of grace was ſuperior in time

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 163.

† He is pleaſed to obſerve, that " the people of God had an advantage " in this reſpect above other people. Plurality of wives might have made " divorces leſs neceſſary: or, if they were all alike diſagreeable, the huſbands " had the reſource of concubines." Where he repreſents it as if there were an allowance to the people of God, in their law itſelf, both to have a plurality of wives, and, beſides theſe, to have concubines, which were not wives. So it is indeed in the law of Mahomet, where every man is allowed four wives, and as many female ſlaves as he can keep. But there is no ſuch conſtitution in the Moſaical law. And the concubines we read of in Scripture, were really wives, though without a dowry: thus in the caſe of the Levite's concubine, Judges xix. he is ſaid expreſsly to be her huſband, and her father is ſeveral times called his *father-in-law*. ver. 3, 4, 5. 7, &c.

‡ Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 170.

" to the natural and Moſaical law among Chriſtians*." What follows is mean banter, mixed with a ſcandalous inſinuation againſt the chaſtity of the Bleſſed Virgin, becauſe Joſeph had thoughts of divorcing her, *having ſuſpected her to have been got with child before her marriage.* This he produces as an *anecdote* from Juſtin Martyr, as if it were a piece of ſecret hiſtory, when every one that has read the goſpel knows, that the evangeliſt both mentions the ſuſpicion, and ſhews how cauſeleſs it was, and how it was removed, Mat. i. 18—24.

He expreſsly calls polygamy and divorces *inſtitutions which have reaſon and revelation on their ſide:* where he ſeems willing to allow for a while, that the Moſaical law was from God, that he may draw a patronage from thence for polygamy and divorces: and he ſpeaks of them as if they were poſitive *inſtitutions*, expreſsly preſcribed and enjoined in that law as by divine authority. But this is not fairly repreſented. They were at beſt barely permitted. Polygamy is no-where expreſsly allowed, much leſs commanded in the law of Moſes. But there are ſeveral things that plainly imply a diſapprobation of it. As particularly the account there given of God's having at the firſt creation formed one woman for one man, and appointed that there ſhould be an inſeparable union between them, and that they *ſhould be one fleſh.* And though Moſes gives inſtances of polygamy among ſome of the patriarchs, they are ſo circumſtanced as to make a very diſadvantageous repreſentation of that practice, and the conſequences of it. The utmoſt that can be ſaid is, that it is not expreſsly prohibited in that law. And there are ſome wiſe regulations added, which indeed ſuppoſe it to be what was then practiſed, but ſeem plainly deſigned to diſcourage it, and to correct and reſtrain the abuſes which it tended to produce. See Exod. xxi. 9, 10. Deut, xxi. 15, 16, 17. The law about divorces, Deut. xxiv. 1—4. ſpecifies *ſome matter of uncleanneſs* as the cauſe of divorce, which ſome of the Jewiſh doctors themſelves, particularly the Caraites, who keep cloſe to the letter of the law, underſtand of adultery, or at leaſt of ſome immodeſt and unchaſte behaviour. And Moſes ſuppoſes the woman that was divorced to be *defiled* by a ſecond marriage, and therefore ordains that the firſt huſband ſhould never have it in his power to take her again;

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 171.

which

which was manifeſtly intended to diſcourage that practice. Our Saviour indeed ſaith, that Moſes *ſuffered it for the hardneſs of their hearts*, Mat. xix. 8. This our author is pleaſed to repreſent as if Chriſt maintained, that "God tolerated ſuperſtitious "practices, or permitted even crimes to have the ſanction of his "law, becauſe of the hardneſs of their hearts*." But to this may be applied the diſtinction which he himſelf mentions, and ſeems to approve, made by the Civilians, "between a *plenary* "and *leſs plenary permiſſion*, one of which gives a right to do, "and the other exempts from puniſhment for doing†." It is the latter kind of permiſſion which was given to polygamy and divorces, and which our Saviour refers to, when he talks of their being ſuffered to do it for the hardneſs of their hearts: not as if it was what God countenanced and approved, but they were ſo far ſuffered to do it as not to incur a legal penalty by doing it: but when he ſent his well-beloved Son to bring the cleareſt and moſt perfect ſcheme of religion, this practice was more plainly prohibited than it had been before. And this, inſtead of being a juſt objection againſt the Chriſtian law, is a proof of its great excellence; which has hereby provided for preſerving to both ſexes their juſt rights, for ſtrengthening the union between the married pair, which it is of great importance to ſtrengthen and improve, for uniting the care of both parents in the education of children, for maintaining the peace and order of families, and for reſtraining an unbounded diſſoluteneſs and licentiouſneſs. Whereas the contrary practice of polygamy and frequent divorces has a tendency to reduce one half of the human ſpecies to a miſerable ſervitude, and to deprive them of their natural rights, to produce the moſt bitter jealouſies and diſtractions in families, and to hinder the orderly education of children. It gives occaſion to unnatural mutilations, and lets the reins looſe to a licentious appetite. I ſhall only farther obſerve, that an author whom no man will ſuſpect of being prejudiced in favour of the Chriſtian law, has, in an ingenious Eſſay, upon conſidering and comparing what may be ſaid for and againſt polygamy and divorces, ſhewn that the law forbidding them is founded upon better reaſons, and more for the general good of mankind, and order

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 179. † Ibid. vol. iv. p. 151. 174.

of

of ſociety, than the contrary. See Mr. Hume's *Moral and Political Eſſays*, Eſſay twenty-ſecond, on polygamy and divorces.

As to the doctrines of Chriſtianity, that of Chriſt being the mediator between God and man, and of our redemption by his blood, they are evidently of great importance. Our author himſelf repreſents them as fundamental doctrines of true original Chriſtianity, for which he ſometimes profeſſes ſo great a regard, and yet hath done all in his power to expoſe them.

The doctrine of a mediator in general he repreſents as unreaſonable and abſurd, and as having been originally derived from the heathens. He ſays, "the doctrine of a mediator between "God and man was eſtabliſhed in the heathen theology, and the "Chriſtians held a mediation likewiſe. But the former ſeem "the moſt excuſable. For the Chriſtian believes that he may "have acceſs at all times to the throne of grace: but the poor "heathen, filled with a religious horror, durſt not approach the "divine Monarch except through the mediation of his miniſ-"ters*." And again, among the extravagant hypotheſes of the pagans, he reckons their notions of mediators and interceſſors with God on the behalf of mankind, of atonement and expiation†. That the heathens had ſome notion of the neceſſity of a mediator or mediators between God and man is very true, which might be owing both to the natural ſenſe they had of their own guilt and unworthineſs, compared with the infinite majeſty, greatneſs, and purity, of the Supreme Being, and to ſome traditions originally derived from extraordinary revelation. But this, like other articles of the ancient primitive religion, became greatly corrupted, and gave occaſion to much ſuperſtition and confuſion in their worſhip. But in the Chriſtian ſcheme this doctrine is ſet in a clear and noble light. The Chriſtian indeed believes, as this writer hath obſerved, that he hath acceſs at all times to the throne of grace, but he alſo believes that it is through the great Mediator whom God hath in his infinite wiſdom and goodneſs appointed, that he hath freedom of acceſs. And nothing can give a more amiable idea of the Supreme Being, or have a greater tendency to ſtrengthen our hope and affiance in him, than to conſider him as a *God in Chriſt reconciling the world unto*

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 81. † Ibid. p. 372, 373.

himſelf,

himſelf, and as having appointed his well-beloved Son, a perſon of infinite dignity, as the great and only Mediator, through whom he is pleaſed to communicate the bleſſings of his grace to ſinners of the human race, and in whoſe name they are to offer up their prayers and praiſes to him, the Father of mercies, and the God of love. It is impoſſible to prove that there is any thing in ſuch a conſtitution unworthy of the ſupreme and infinitely-perfect Being. And if we are aſſured by a well-atteſted revelation, that this is the order appointed by God in his ſovereign wiſdom, it ought to be received and improved with the higheſt thankfulneſs. And it nearly imports thoſe to whom this revelation is made known, to take care that they do not reject the grace and mercy of God, and his offered ſalvation, by refuſing to accept it in that way which he himſelf hath thought fit to appoint. If this be a divine conſtitution (and we are as ſure that it is ſo, as that the goſpel is true), they are not chargeable with a ſlight guilt, who, inſtead of making a proper uſe of it, and taking the advantage it is fitted to yield, preſume to cavil at it, and raſhly to arraign the proceedings of the Supreme Wiſdom and Goodneſs, in a caſe of which they cannot poſſibly pretend to be competent judges.

With reſpect to the doctrine of redemption, which, he obſerves from Dr. Clarke, is a *main and fundamental article of the Chriſtian faith*, he takes upon him to pronounce, that "the "utmoſt endeavours have been and always muſt be employed in "vain, to reduce the entire plan of the divine wiſdom, in the "miſſion of Chriſt, and the redemption of man, to a coherent, "intelligible, and reaſonable ſcheme of doctrines and facts *." And it is the entire deſign of the thirty-ſixth and thirty-ſeventh of his Fragments and Eſſays, to expoſe that doctrine, and to anſwer what Dr. Clarke had offered to ſhew, that there is nothing in it contrary to reaſon †.

He obſerves, that "the fall of man lies at the foundation of "the doctrine of redemption, and that the account of it is irre-"concileable to every idea we have of the wiſdom, juſtice, and "goodneſs, to ſay nothing of the dignity, of the Supreme Be-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 318.

† Ibid. vol. v. p. 279, *et ſeq.*

ing."

"ing*." I need not add any thing here to what has been already offered on that ſubject in my thirteenth Letter. The great corruption of mankind has been acknowledged by the moſt diligent obſervers in all ages; and great is the guilt and miſery they have thereby incurred: and it is no way reaſonable to ſuppoſe that this was the original ſtate of the human nature. The redemption of mankind is a proviſion made by infinite wiſdom and goodneſs, for recovering them from the corruption into which they had fallen, and the guilt they had incurred, and for reſtoring them to righteouſneſs and true holineſs, and even raiſing them to everlaſting felicity, in ſuch a way as is moſt conſiſtent with the honour of God's government, and of his illuſtrious moral excellencies. And if there be ſome things relating to the methods of our redemption which we are not well able diſtinctly to explain or comprehend, it is not to be wondered at, conſidering that theſe are things of a high nature, and which depend upon the determinations and councils of the divine wiſdom, of which, without his revelation of them, we cannot aſſume to be proper judges.

There are two queſtions here proper to be conſidered; one concerning expiation in general; the other concerning that particular method of expiation held forth to us in the Goſpel, by the death and ſufferings of Jeſus Chriſt, as a ſacrifice for the ſins of the world.

As to the general queſtion, it can ſcarce be reaſonably denied, that if we conſider God as the wiſe and righteous governor of the world, who is infinitely juſt as well as merciful; if any expedient can be fixed upon for his pardoning his ſinful offending creatures, and diſpenſing his graces and benefits to them, in ſuch a way as at the ſame time to manifeſt his invariable love of order, his juſt deteſtation of all moral evil, and the ſteady regard he hath to the vindicating the authority of his government and laws; this would be moſt worthy of his rectoral wiſdom, and ſhew forth his attributes, eſpecially his juſtice and mercy, in their proper harmony, ſo as to render him both moſt amiable and moſt venerable.

If it be alleged, that repentance alone is a ſufficient expiation,

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 283, 284.

not

not to repeat what hath been already offered on this head in the XXVIIth Letter, p. 64, it may be demanded whether God could in ſtrict juſtice puniſh ſinners for their tranſgreſſions of his laws, and for the crimes they have committed? If he could, it is becauſe thoſe tranſgreſſions and crimes really deſerve puniſhment. If thoſe crimes deſerve puniſhment, it muſt be an act of free ſovereign grace and mercy to remit or not to inflict the deſerved penalty. And as it is an act of ſovereignty, it muſt depend upon what ſhall ſeem fit to the ſupreme and infinitely wiſe and perfect Mind to determine, upon a full view of what is beſt and propereſt upon the whole. And are we ſo well acquainted with what the Infinite Majeſty oweth to himſelf, and what the greateſt good of the moral world doth require, as to take upon us poſitively to determine a thing in which the divine authority and prerogatives, and the reaſon of his government, are ſo nearly concerned? Upon what foundation can we pretend to be ſure, that the great Governor of the world is obliged to pardon ſinners at all times and in all caſes, barely and immediately upon their repentance, and even to crown their imperfect obedience, though attended with many failures and defects, with the glorious reward of eternal life? And if no man can pretend without an inexcuſable raſhneſs and ignorance to be ſure of this, who can take upon him to determine, what expiation or ſatisfaction for ſin, beſides the repentance of the ſinner, the moſt wiſe and righteous Governor of the world may ſee fit to inſiſt upon? This, if any thing, ſeems to be a proper ſubject for divine revelation.

Dr. Clarke had argued, as his Lordſhip obſerves, that the "cuſtom of ſacrifices which univerſally obtained ſhews it to "have been the general ſenſe of mankind, that ſome expiation "was neceſſary for ſin, and that God would not be appeaſed "without ſome puniſhment and ſatisfaction*." Our author ſpeaks of this way of arguing with great contempt.

He ſays, that "the moſt abſurd notions which ſuperſtition "ever ſpread in contradiction to the law of nature and reaſon, "are applied to the proceedings of God with man." But ſince it is a matter of fact that cannot be denied, that the offering

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 286.

ſacrifices

ſacrifices to God was one of the moſt ancient external rites of religion of which we have any account; ſince it obtained early and univerſally, not only among polytheiſts and idolaters, but among the moſt religious adorers of the one true God; this naturally leadeth us to conclude, that it was a part of the primitive religion originally enjoined to the firſt anceſtors of the human race, and from them tranſmitted to their deſcendants. Upon any other ſuppoſition it is hard to conceive, how men ſhould come ſo univerſally to look upon the taking away the life of a beaſt, to be well-pleaſing in the ſight of God, and an acceptable piece of divine worſhip. The beſt way of accounting for this ſeems to be, that it was a ſacred rite of divine appointment, which was originally intended for wiſe and valuable purpoſes; *viz.* to impreſs men's minds with a ſenſe of the evil and demerit of ſin, and to be an acknowledgment on the part of the ſinner that his ſins deſerved puniſhment; and at the ſame time to be a pledge and token of God's being willing to receive an atonement, and of his pardoning grace and mercy. And ſince it appears to have been an original part of the divine ſcheme, that God would ſend his Son into the world, in the fulneſs of time, to ſuffer and die for the redemption of mankind, in whoſe blood that covenant was founded, by virtue of which good men in all ages were to be ſaved upon their repentance, and ſincere though imperfect obedience; then ſuppoſing that ſome diſcovery of this was made to the firſt parents of the human race after their apoſtacy, as a foundation for their hope and comfort, this gives a moſt reaſonable account of the inſtitution of ſuch a ſacred rite; than which nothing could be better fitted to keep up a notion and expectation of a ſuffering Redeemer, and to be a conſtant memorial to them both of their own guilt and of the divine mercy. And hence thoſe ſacrifices were very properly accompanied with prayers, confeſſions of ſin, and thankſgivings, and were regarded as federal rites, and tokens of friendſhip and reconciliation between God and man. But this, like other parts of the primitive religion, became corrupted. The true original deſign of ſacrifices was forgotten and loſt, though the external rite ſtill continued; and they were looked upon as in themſelves and of their own nature properly expiatory.

Our way is now prepared to conſider the queſtion as it relates particularly

particularly to that method of expiation, which is held forth to us in the Gospel by the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, a Mediator of infinite dignity. And with regard to this he urgeth, that "our notions of God's moral attributes will lead "us to think, that God would be satisfied more agreeably to his "mercy and goodness without any expiation upon the repentance "of the offenders, and more agreeably to his justice with any "other expiation rather than this*." In opposition to this, it may be affirmed, that supposing an expiation to have been necessary on the behalf of sinful men, none can be conceived more worthy, or more valuable, or more capable of answering the most excellent ends, than that which is set before us in the Gospel.

We are there taught, that upon a foresight of man's apostacy, and the miseries and ruin to which the human race would be exposed by their iniquities and transgressions, God had, in his infinite wisdom and grace, determined to provide a Saviour for recovering them from their guilt and misery to holiness and happiness: and that it was appointed in the divine councils that this Saviour should, in order to the accomplishing this great design, take upon him human flesh, and should not only bring a clear revelation of the divine will to mankind, and exhibit a most perfect example of universal holiness, goodness, and purity, but that he should on the behalf of sinful men, and to make atonement for their offences, submit to undergo the most grievous sufferings and death: that accordingly, in that season which seemed fittest to the divine wisdom, God sent his own well-beloved Son into the world, a person of infinite dignity, upon this most gracious and benevolent purpose and design: That this glorious person actually took upon him our nature, and lived and conversed among men here on earth: That he brought the most perfect discoveries of the divine will that had been ever made to mankind, for instructing them in those things which it was of the highest importance to them to know: That in his sacred life and practice he exhibited all the beauties of holiness, and yielded the most perfect obedience to the divine law, which he exemplified in the dignity of its authority and in the excellency of its precepts: That besides

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol v. p. 286.

this,

this, prompted by his own generous love to mankind, and in obedience to the divine appointment, he voluntarily ſubmitted for our ſakes to the deepeſt humiliations and abaſements, and the moſt dolorous agonies and paſſions, followed by a moſt cruel and ignominious death, that he might obtain eternal redemption for us. He ſuffered for ſins, the juſt for the unjuſt, that he might bring us back unto God. By theſe his ſufferings and obedience on our behalf, which was infinitely pleaſing in the ſight of God, he became the propitiation for the ſins of the world, and did that in reality which the ſacrifices could only do in type and figure. And on the account of what he hath done and ſuffered on the behalf of ſinful men, God has been graciouſly pleaſed to promiſe to grant a full and free pardon of all their ſins, upon their ſincere repentance, to communicate to them through this great Mediator the bleſſings of his grace, and to crown their ſincere though imperfect obedience with the glorious reward of eternal life: That accordingly that ſuffering Saviour having by himſelf purged our ſins, was raiſed again from the dead, and crowned with glory and honour: That he now appears for guilty men as their great advocate and interceſſor: And is conſtituted the great diſpenſer of thoſe ſpiritual bleſſings which he had by the divine appointment procured for us, and is the author of eternal ſalvation to them that obey him.

This is one illuſtrious inſtance of what our author declares, that *the theology of the goſpel is marvellous.* It could only have been known by divine revelation: and now that it is diſcovered to us, it calls for our higheſt admiration and thankfulneſs.

Let us now conſider the objections he hath urged againſt it.

He repreſents it as abſurd to ſuppoſe, that "God ſent his only-"begotten Son, who had not offended him, to be ſacrificed for "men who had offended him, that he might expiate their ſins, "and ſatisfy his own anger*." As to God's ſending his own Son to be the Saviour of ſinful men, to redeem them from miſery and ruin, and to raiſe them to eternal life, it cannot reaſonably be denied, that the more glorious and wonderful the perſon was, and the greater his dignity, the better was he fitted for accompliſhing the great work to which he was deſigned; and the greater

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 286.

value

value it derived to the obedience he yielded, and the ſufferings he endured on our behalf. This writer obſerves, that "the "means of reconciling all ſinners to an offended Deity were "made by the pagan theology extremely eaſy." And he particularly inſtances in expiatory ſacrifices *. But no ſuch thing can be juſtly objected againſt the doctrine of our redemption by the blood of Chriſt. It is certainly of the higheſt importance to mankind, that they ſhould not entertain too ſlight thoughts of the evil of ſin, or look upon it as too eaſy a matter to obtain the favour of God when they had offended him, or imagine that his juſt diſpleaſure againſt ſin may be averted by trivial expedients. All this is effectually provided againſt in the goſpel ſcheme. The expiation in this caſe is ſuppoſed to be effected by a ſacrifice of infinite virtue, not to be equalled or repeated. This gives the moſt effectual conviction, that it is not a ſlight or trifling matter, to atone for the ſins of men, and to offer ſuch an expiation as is ſuited to the majeſty of God to accept. No man that believes this can poſſibly entertain ſlight thoughts of the evil and demerit of ſin. It tendeth to fill us with the moſt awful reverential conceptions of the infinite majeſty of the Supreme Being, his righteouſneſs and purity, and the inviolable regard he hath to the authority of his government and laws.

As to the other part of the objection, that it is abſurd to ſuppoſe, that "the Son of God who had not offended ſhould be ſa-"crificed for men who had offended him," the truth is, that if he had not been perfectly innocent and holy, he could not have been properly fitted to expiate the ſins of men. Had he been himſelf guilty and a ſinner, inſtead of making an atonement for the ſins of others, he muſt have been puniſhed for his own. Nor could his oblation have been of ſuch value and merit as to be proper for anſwering the great ends for which it was deſigned. If it be ſtill objected, that it is unjuſt and cruel that an innocent perſon ſhould be puniſhed for the guilty, I anſwer, that it will be allowed, that if the evils and ſufferings the guilty had incurred by their crimes ſhould, by the mere arbitrary act and authority of the ſupreme ruling power, be laid on an innocent perſon without and againſt his own conſent, this would be contrary to all

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 210.

the rules both of goodneſs and juſtice, and would be a confounding the whole order of things. But this is far from being the caſe. The ſufferings of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt were not arbitrarily impoſed upon him by the mere authority of God. He himſelf freely undertook the great work of our redemption. He conſented to undergo theſe temporary ſufferings for the moſt valuable ends, for promoting the glory of God, and the ſalvation of mankind. The admitting him therefore to ſuffer on our behalf, was not doing him any injuſtice, but giving him an opportunity of performing the moſt wonderful act of obedience, and exhibiting the moſt aſtoniſhing inſtance of love and goodneſs towards periſhing ſinners, from whence, according to the divine compact and covenant, the moſt glorious benefits were to redound to the human race; and he himſelf was to be recompenſed with the higheſt glory in that nature which he aſſumed. It is no hard matter therefore to anſwer the queſtion our author puts, "Whether the "truth of that maxim—that it is not equally fit that an innocent "perſon ſhould be extremely miſerable, as that he ſhould be free "from ſuch miſery—the innocence of the Lamb of God, and "the ſufferings and ignominious death of Chriſt, can be recon-"ciled together, and how*?" That Chriſt endured the moſt grievous ſufferings, and was put to a moſt cruel and ignominious death, and conſequently that in his caſe a perſon perfectly innocent was expoſed to the greateſt ſufferings, is a matter of fact which cannot be denied. And it cannot reaſonably be pretended, that it renders thoſe ſufferings more unjuſt, that he ſhould ſuffer on the account of ſinful men, to make atonement for their ſins, and to procure for them the moſt valuable bleſſings, than if he had endured thoſe ſufferings without any ſuch view at all. The ſufferings of a moſt holy and righteous perſon are perfectly reconcileable to all the rules of juſtice, and to the order and reaſon of things, provided thoſe ſufferings are what he himſelf hath voluntarily undertaken, and that they anſwer a moſt valuable and excellent end for the public good, and that the ſuffering perſon himſelf afterwards receives a glorious recompence. And according to the account given us in the Goſpel, all theſe circumſtances concurred in the ſufferings of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 288.

Dr.

Dr. Clarke had mentioned ſome of the excellent ends which the ſufferings and death of Chriſt were deſigned and fitted to anſwer: ſuch as, that this method "tends to diſcountenance "and prevent preſumption, to diſcourage men from repeating "their tranſgreſſions, to give them a deep ſenſe of the heinous "nature of ſin, and to convince them of the excellence and "importance of the laws of God, and the indiſpenſable neceſ-"ſity of paying obedience to them*." Lord Bolingbroke has not offered any argument to prove, that redemption by the death of Chriſt was not well fitted to anſwer theſe ends, but in his dictatorial manner has pronounced, that "the prudential rea-"ſons aſſigned by Dr. Clarke for the death of Chriſt would "appear futile and impertinent, if applied to human councils; "but in their application to the divine, they became profane and "impious.—That the death of Chriſt, inſtead of being proper to "diſcountenance preſumption, and to diſcourage men from "repeating their tranſgreſſions, as Clarke pretends, might, and in "fact has countenanced preſumption, without diſcouraging men "from repeating their tranſgreſſions†." There is no doctrine but may be abuſed by the perverſeneſs of bad and licentious men. Sinners may take encouragement from the goodneſs and mercy of God to continue in their evil courſes, in hopes that he will not puniſh them for their crimes. And on the other hand, the doctrine concerning the juſtice of God may be abuſed, to harden men in their ſins, and to cut them off from all hopes of mercy, which would have an equal tendency to deſtroy all piety and virtue, and ſubvert the very foundations of religion. But the Goſpel ſcheme of our reconciliation by the death of Chriſt provides admirably againſt both theſe extremes. On the one hand, the fulleſt diſcoveries are made of the infinite grace and goodneſs of God towards mankind, in that he gave his only-begotten Son, that through his ſufferings and death a way might be opened for redeeming and ſaving the loſt human race. A free and univerſal offer is made of pardon and ſalvation to all ſinners without exception, that ſhall accept of offered mercy upon the gracious and reaſonable terms which are there appointed.

* Clarke's Evidences of natural and revealed Religion, p. 351. Ed. 7th.

† Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 289.

The moſt exceeding great and precious promiſes are made, the moſt gracious aſſiſtances are provided to help our infirmities, and we are raiſed to the privileges of the children of God, and to the moſt animating hopes of a glorious reſurrection and eternal life, as the reward even of our imperfect obedience. It is impoſſible that any thing ſhould give us a more amiable idea of the Supreme Being, and of his wonderful love to mankind. Nothing can have a greater tendency to enlarge our joys, and to excite the moſt grateful and devout affections towards our heavenly Father, as the father of mercies, and the God of love, and towards the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the great Saviour and lover of our natures, and to lay us under the ſtrongeſt engagements to love and obey him.

But then on the other hand, leſt this ſhould be abuſed, the Goſpel preſents the Supreme Being as of infinite juſtice, righteouſneſs, and purity, who hath ſuch a hatred againſt ſin, and ſuch a regard to the authority of his government and laws, that he would not receive guilty tranſgreſſors of the human race to his grace and favour, upon any leſs conſideration than the ſufferings and ſacrifice of his well-beloved Son on their behalf; than which nothing could poſſibly exhibit a more awful diſplay of God's diſpleaſure againſt ſin: ſo that he hath taken care to manifeſt his righteouſneſs and juſtice, even in the methods of our reconciliation. We are farther aſſured, that though the ſacrifice Chriſt hath offered be ſo infinitely meritorious, yet the virtue of it is only applied upon ſuch terms as the divine wiſdom hath appointed, *i. e.* to thoſe only that return to God by a ſincere repentance and new obedience. So that on this plan the neceſſity of holineſs and obedience is moſt ſtrongly and effectually ſecured, ſince without this there can be no intereſt in that great atonement, and conſequently no hope of pardon and ſalvation. And the ſevereſt threatenings are denounced againſt thoſe who abuſe all this grace, and turn it into licentiouſneſs: and they are warned, that their puniſhments ſhall be heightened in proportion to the aggravations of their crime. Thus the Goſpel ſcheme of redemption through Jeſus Chriſt hath an admirable propriety and harmony in it, and bears upon it the illuſtrious characters of a divine original. It giveth the greateſt hopes to the upright and ſincere, without affording the leaſt ground of encourage-

encouragement to the obſtinately wicked and preſumptuous ſinner. It repreſents God as moſt amiable and moſt awful, infinitely good, gracious, and merciful, and at the ſame time infinitely juſt, righteous, and holy. Theſe characters in a lower degree muſt concur in an excellent earthly prince; much more muſt they be ſuppoſed to be united in the higheſt poſſible degree of eminence in the Supreme Being, the All-wiſe and All-perfect Governor of the world.

He concludes his remarks on what Dr. Clarke had offered to ſhew, that the doctrine of our redemption by Chriſt is not contrary to reaſon, with *a general reflection or two.* One is this. "Let us ſuppoſe a great prince governing a wicked and rebel-"lious people: he has it in his power to puniſh, but thinks fit "to pardon them. But he orders his only and well-beloved "ſon to be put to death, to expiate their ſins, and ſatisfy his "royal vengeance." And then he aſks, "Would this proceed-"ing appear to the eye of reaſon, and in the unprejudiced light "of nature, wiſe, or juſt, or good? No man dares to ſay that it "would, except it be a divine *." But no divine would put ſo abſurd a caſe, which, as he repreſents it, could not poſſibly anſwer any valuable end. The King would have no right to put his ſon to death for the crimes of rebels; and to do it againſt his conſent, would be the height of injuſtice and cruelty: and even if he ſhould conſent, it would be the irretrievable loſs of an hopeful Prince, both to the King his father, and to the community who had an intereſt in his life. But if a caſe could be ſuppoſed, in which the death of an excellent Prince would be the ſaving of a ſtate from ruin, and the beſt and propereſt means for averting the greateſt public evils and calamities, and for procuring the greateſt public happineſs, I believe it would be acknowledged to be a glorious action for a King to give up his ſon, and for the Prince his ſon to give himſelf up to death, for ſo extenſive a benefit, and would be celebrated as ſuch to all ſucceeding ages. Though ſtill in that caſe there could be no hope of the ſuffering perſon's being reſtored to life, or to the public, or having a proper reward given him for ſo conſummate a virtue: which makes a vaſt difference between this caſe, or indeed any

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 289.

other that could be put in human governments, and our redemption by the ſufferings and death of Chriſt as ſtated in the goſpel.

His ſecond reflection is, that "Dr. Clarke acknowledges, "that human reaſon could never have diſcovered ſuch a method "as this for the reconciliation of ſinners to an offended God." From whence he argues, that "therefore it cannot be ſaid, "that this method is agreeable to ſound unprejudiced reaſon, "which is what Dr. Clarke here undertook to ſhew*." But there is no inconſiſtency between theſe. A thing may be of ſuch a kind, that reaſon could not have diſcovered it, and yet when diſcovered may have nothing in it contrary to reaſon, and may be ſuch as unprejudiced reaſon will approve. And this I take to be the caſe of the ſcripture doctrine of our redemption. Our author indeed hath attempted to ſhew, that this doctrine is more abſurd than any thing that can be found in any ſyſtem of paganiſm. But what he offers to this purpoſe is entirely to be charged, not upon the doctrine itſelf as laid down in ſcripture, but upon the baſe and injurious repreſentation he is pleaſed to make of it. He concludes with ſaying, that "the heathens could not imagine "any thing ſo repugnant, as the doctrine of our redemption by "the death of Chriſt, to all their ideas of order, of juſtice, of "goodneſs, and even of theiſm†." If this were ſo, the heathen world were far from being ſo diſpoſed and prepared for receiving the Chriſtian myſteries as he ſometimes pretends they were. It will be acknowledged, that *Chriſt crucified* was to the Greeks, who had a high conceit of their own wiſdom and learning, *foolishneſs:* but it was the *wiſdom and power of God*, as St Paul expreſſeth it. And accordingly this doctrine of the croſs of Chriſt triumphed over all the oppoſition which their boaſted learning and philoſophy, aſſiſted by the power and authority of the civil magiſtrate, the influence and artifices of the prieſts, and the prejudices of the vulgar, and the vices and paſſions of men, could raiſe againſt it. There are, no doubt, great difficulties attending the ſcheme of our redemption. But this writer, if he were conſiſtent with himſelf, ought not to make this an objection againſt its truth or divine original. He obſerves, that "nothing "is more conformable to our ideas of the infinitely Perfect Being,

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 290. † Ibid. p. 291.

"than

" than to believe, that human reaſon cannot account for the " proceedings of infinite wiſdom in a multitude of inſtances, in " many of thoſe perhaps that ſeem the moſt obvious to it*." And he elſewhere declares, that " if infinite wiſdom and power " created and governs the univerſe, we muſt prepare to meet " with ſeveral appearances, which we cannot explain, nor recon- " cile to the ideas we endeavour to form of the divine perfections, " and which are diſproportionable to our and every other finite " underſtanding†." And finding fault with the pertneſs and preſumption of divines, he ſays, " it would paſs for downright " madneſs, if we were not accuſtomed to it, to hear a creature of " the loweſt form of intelligent beings undertake to penetrate " the deſigns, to fathom the depths, and to unveil the myſteries of " infinite wiſdom, which the moſt exalted of created intelligences " would adore in ſilence‡." This may be juſtly turned againſt himſelf. It is no preſumption to believe what God has revealed of his councils concerning the methods of our ſalvation, or to think and ſpeak of them as far as he has been pleaſed to declare them. But it is an inexcuſable arrogance to preſume to arraign the proceedings of infinite wiſdom made known to us in a well-atteſted revelation, becauſe there are ſome things relating to them which we are not able diſtinctly to explain, or to account for. This is what our author hath done with a raſhneſs and inſolence that is ſhocking. Some paſſages of this kind have been already produced, to which I ſhall add one more. Speaking of the myſtery of our redemption by the blood of Chriſt, he aſſerts, that " the love there diſplayed is partiality, and the juſtice there " ſhewed is injuſtice—And that injuſtice and cruelty are united " in this: that mankind would not have been redeemed, if the " Jews had not crucified Chriſt: and yet they were rejected and " puniſhed for crucifying him §." He here chargeth it as a great injuſtice and cruelty to reject and puniſh the Jews for crucifying Chriſt, becauſe mankind could not have been redeemed without it: and yet he had before obſerved, that " Chriſt was ſacrificed " by men who meaned no expiation, and who meaned a murder,

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 182.
† Ibid. p. 365.
‡ Ibid. p. 297.
§ Ibid. p. 582.

" not a ſacrifice *." God's bringing the greateſt good out of the injuſtice and wickedneſs of the Jews, which he foreſaw and permitted, but did not cauſe, is indeed an illuſtrious proof of his infinite wiſdom, but is no extenuation of their crime: and therefore there was no injuſtice in puniſhing them for it. But if the Jews had not crucified Chriſt, which is the caſe this writer puts, and which depends upon the modeſt ſuppoſition of God's being miſtaken in his preſcience, it would not follow, that his deſigns for the redemption of mankind would have been diſappointed: infinite wiſdom would not have been at a loſs for proper methods to accompliſh its own glorious views.

This is not the only paſſage, in which our author, who upon all occaſions ſets no bounds to his invectives againſt the Jews, expreſſes ſome pity towards them, as having been very hardly dealt with, in being puniſhed for crucifying our Lord. He obſerves, that "Chriſt contrived at his death to appear innocent "to the Roman governor, and at the ſame time contrived to "appear guilty to the Jews, and to make them the inſtruments "of his death, by a ſequel of the moſt artful behaviour—That "they were rejected for not believing him to be the Meſſiah—"And he kept them in their error; at leaſt he did nothing to "draw them out of it, that they might bring him to the croſs, "and complete the redemption of mankind, without knowing "that they did it at their own expence †." Nothing can poſſibly be more unfair and diſingenuous than this repreſentation. It is evident, that our Lord took all proper opportunities of laying before the Jews the proofs of his Meſſiahſhip; and that nothing could be more wiſely conducted than the way he took gradually to remove their prejudices, though he did not make an expreſs and public declaration of his being the Meſſiah, till the evidence ſhould be completed, and it ſhould plainly appear, that his kingdom was not of this world. Inſtead of laying plots to engage the Jews to put him to death, he on many occaſions uſed the moſt prudent precautions to avoid the effects of their malice, till he could do it no longer, without betraying the truth, and counteracting the deſign upon which he was ſent.

The laſt thing I ſhall take notice of with regard to what Lord

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 291. † Ibid. vol. iv. p. 537, 538, 539.

Boling-

Bolingbroke hath offered concerning the doctrine of our redemption, is, that he repreſents it as having proceeded from *the pride of the human heart*. He blames Archbiſhop Tillotſon for obſerving, very pathetically, at the cloſe of one of his ſermons, that "when the angels fell, God left them in their fallen ſtate: but "when man fell, he ſent his Son, his only-begotten Son, his "dearly-beloved Son, to redeem the race by his ſufferings and "paſſion." Upon which he remarks, that "this raiſes us not only "to an equality with the angels, but to a ſuperiority over them*." And he afterwards cenſures the divines, for being "unwilling to "leave their notions of human worth and importance, or of the "deſigns of God in favour of men;" and ſays, that "though "our religion forbids pride, and teaches humility, yet the whole "ſyſtem of it tends to inſpire the former." He inſtances in its teaching, that "man was made after the image of God, and that "God abandoned myriads of angels, but determined to raiſe man "from his fall by the ſacrifice of his Son." And he aſks, "is it "poſſible to conceive higher notions of a created being than "theſe revealed truths muſt inſpire†?" It is certain, that, according to the ſcripture account, God *ſpared not the angels that ſinned*, though originally ſuperior to the human race, but ſent his Son to redeem mankind. And undoubtedly there were wiſe reaſons for that proceeding, which God hath not thought fit to reveal to us, and which therefore we cannot pretend to judge of. But whatever was the reaſon of it, God's extending his grace and mercy to mankind in ſo marvellous a way, certainly demandeth our moſt grateful acknowledgments. We are taught everywhere in ſcripture to aſcribe the great things God hath done for us, not to any worthineſs in ourſelves, but merely to his ſovereign unobliged grace and goodneſs. It is manifeſt that the whole ſcheme of Chriſtianity tendeth to inſpire us with the moſt adoring thoughts of God's infinite majeſty, greatneſs, and purity, and at the ſame time to impreſs and affect our hearts with the moſt humbling ſenſe of our own meanneſs, guilt, and unworthineſs. It tendeth not to inſpire us with pride, but with gratitude for undeſerved favours and benefits: and at the ſame time that it filleth us with the higheſt admiration of the divine condeſcenſion and

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 506, 507. † Ibid. vol. v. p. 347.

goodneſs

goodneſs towards us, it teacheth us to ſink low into the very duſt before his glorious majeſty, acknowledging that we are leſs than the leaſt of his mercies, and giving him the whole glory of our ſalvation.

It is obſervable, that Lord Bolingbroke ſeems on many occaſions very ſolicitous to prevent our having too high a conceit of our own excellence and importance. He blames the pagan theiſts for flattering human nature, when they taught, that a good man imitates God, and that God is a lover of mankind, and made man to be happy*. To human pride and ambition he attributes the notion of the ſoul's being a ſpiritual ſubſtance diſtinct from the body, and the belief of its immortality†. To this alſo he aſcribes the doctrine of a particular providence, and the notion that God is attentive to the prayers and wants of men; and is ready on many occaſions to aſſiſt, protect, and reward the good, and to puniſh or reclaim the wicked‡. It ſeems then that, for fear of being thought too proud and aſſuming, we muſt deny that we have any ſouls diſtinct from our bodies, or at leaſt muſt confeſs them to be like our bodies, corruptible and mortal; we muſt not dare to aſpire after a conformity to the Deity in his moral excellencies, nor to think that he loveth us, or is concerned for our happineſs; we muſt either not addreſs ourſelves to him at all, or not preſume to imagine that he heareth or regardeth our prayers. It would be thinking too highly of our own importance to imagine, that God exerciſeth any care or inſpection over us, or that he taketh notice of our actions with approbation or diſpleaſure, or will call us to an account for them. Thus this ſagacious writer hath found out the ſecret of baniſhing religion out of the world, under pretence of guarding againſt the pride of the human heart.

I need not take any particular notice of what his Lordſhip hath offered concerning the doctrine of the Trinity. He affirms, that "the Scriptures which are come down to us are very far "from being vouchers of the Trinity we profeſs to believe.— "And that we may aſſure ourſelves, that many of the Scriptures "and traditions which obtained in the primitive ages, depoſed "againſt this Trinity§." Where he talks with as much confi-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 317, 318.
† Ibid. vol. iv. p. 481.
‡ Ibid. vol. v. p. 418.
§ Ibid. vol. iv. p. 493.

dence

dence of Scriptures and traditions which he ſuppoſes to be loſt, and of what was contained in them, as if he himſelf had ſeen and read them. He chargeth St. Peter and St. Paul with inconſiſtency and contradiction, in ſometimes calling Chriſt a man, and at other times talking a different language, and calling him God*. Though ſuppoſing him to have the human nature in a near union with the divine, there is no contradiction in it at all. He has a long marginal note about the ſentiments of the primitive fathers concerning the Trinity, and cenſures biſhop Bull†. And he afterwards enlarges on the differences among Chriſtians relating to it, and the diſputes between Arius and Athanaſius‡. But he ſays nothing on this ſubject but what is very common, and has been often more fully and diſtinctly inſiſted upon by others, and therefore deſerves no particular conſideration here. What ſeems more peculiar to him is, that in the account he gives of the doctrine of the Trinity, he repreſents it as having been originally derived from the heathen theology. He ſays, that the heathen philoſophers "aſſumed a Trinity of divine hy-"poſtaſes in the Godhead. They held a Monad or Unity above "all eſſence, a ſecond proceeding eternally from the firſt, and "a third proceeding eternally from the ſecond, or from the "firſt and ſecond§." That the hypotheſis of the Trinity made a part of the Egyptian theology. "It was brought from Egypt "into Greece by Orpheus, whoſoever he was, and probably by "others in that remote antiquity: and that it was in much uſe "afterwards: and we find the traces of it in all the theiſtical "philoſophers taught‖." He ſpeaks of the Egyptian, Pythagorean, Platonic, and of the Zoroaſtrian, Chaldic, and Samothracian Trinity**. And he mentions it alſo as having been anciently taught among the Chineſe, and produces a paſſage out of one of their ancient books to this purpoſe††. A late ingenious author has carried this ſtill farther, and has endeavoured at large to ſhew, that ſome veſtiges of the doctrine of the Trinity are to

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 488.
‡ Ibid. p. 483, *et ſeq.*
‖ Ibid. p. 97. 470, 471.
†† Ibid. vol. v. p. 230.
† Ibid. p. 98, *et ſeq.*
§ Ibid. p. 94, 95.
** Ibid. p. 472.

be

be found among the ſages of all nations, times, and religions*. But he differs from Lord Bolingbroke in this, that whereas his Lordſhip charges it on the vain ſubtilties and reveries of the ancient metaphyſical theology, this gentleman ſuppoſes it muſt have been owing to ſupernatural revelation, or ſome tradition originally derived from thence. And I cannot help thinking, that ſuppoſing the fact to have been as they both repreſent it, this ſeems to be a more reaſonable way of accounting for it. Since it is otherwiſe not eaſy to conceive how it ſhould come to paſs, that ſo many great and wiſe men in different ages and nations, from the moſt ancient times, ſhould have agreed in acknowledging ſome kind of triad in the divine nature.

I ſhall only take notice of one paſſage more in Lord Bolingbroke's works relating to the Trinity: It is this: That "the "doctrine of the Trinity gives the Mahometans as much reaſon "to ſay, that the revelation which Mahomet publiſhed was ne"ceſſary to eſtabliſh the unity of the Supreme Being, in oppoſi"tion to the polytheiſm which Chriſtianity had introduced, as "Chriſtians have to inſiſt, that the revelation which Chriſt pub"liſhed a few centuries before, was neceſſary to eſtabliſh the "unity of the Godhead againſt the pagan polytheiſm†." But the caſe was very different. The unity of God could not be more ſtrongly and expreſsly aſſerted than it is in the holy Scriptures, both of the Old Teſtament and the New; ſo that the pretended revelation of Mahomet was needleſs in this reſpect. It is a fundamental principle of Chriſtianity, that there is but one God, and one Mediator between God and man, and that Jeſus Chriſt is he. Thoſe who maintain the doctrine of the Trinity ſtill hold the unity of the Godhead. Convince them that the Trinity is inconſiſtent with that unity, and they will abandon it. They cannot therefore be juſtly charged with polytheiſm, which is only imputed to them by a conſequence which they expreſsly deny and diſavow.

* See Chevalier Ramſay's Principles of natural and revealed Religion, vol. ii. chap. 2.

† Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 501.

LETTER XXXIII.

The Chriſtian Doctrine of future Retributions vindicated—It does not charge God with Injuſtice in this preſent State.—Future Puniſhments not contrary to Reaſon or the divine Attributes—The Pretence, that they can be of no Uſe either for Reparation or Terror, examined—The Rewards and Puniſhments of a future State ſhall be proportioned to the different Degrees of Virtue and Vice—The Propriety of appointing a State of Trial to reaſonable Beings—It is wiſely ordered, that the Sentence at the Day of Judgment ſhall be final and irreverſible—The Chriſtian Repreſentation of that Judgment and its Conſequences, ſolemn and affecting, and of excellent Uſe—Lord Bolingbroke's injurious Charge againſt the primitive Chriſtians—His Complaints of the Corruptions brought into the Chriſtian Church—Such Writers very improper to ſet up for Reformers—True genuine Chriſtianity needs not fear the Aſſaults of its ableſt Adverſaries—Concluſion of the Obſervations on Lord Bolingbroke's Poſthumous Works.

SIR,

IT is a ſatisfaction to me, as I am apt to think it is to you, that the work is drawing near to a concluſion; and the more ſo, as you know that I have, during a conſiderable part of the time in which I have been engaged in it, laboured under great indiſpoſition of body, which has rendered it more tedious and fatiguing to me, than otherwiſe it would have been. It will be well, if ſome marks of this do not appear in the performance itſelf. If this be the caſe, I hope candid allowance will be made for it.

The only thing that now remains to be conſidered, with regard to Lord Bolingbroke's attempts againſt Chriſtianity, relateth to what he has offered concerning the Scripture doctrine of future rewards and puniſhments. He has done all he could to expoſe that doctrine, and Chriſtianity on the account of it, eſpecially the doctrine of future puniſhments. This is the principal deſign of

of ſeveral of his Fragments and Eſſays in the latter part of the fifth volume of his works: particularly of the ſixty-ſixth, ſixty-ſeventh, ſixty-eighth, ſixty-ninth, ſeventieth, ſeventy-firſt, ſeventy-ſecond, and ſeventy-ſeventh, of thoſe Fragments and Eſſays.

Before I enter on a diſtinct conſideration of what he has offered on that ſubject, I would make two general obſervations.

The one is, that he aſſerts the doctrine of future rewards and puniſhments to be an original doctrine of the Chriſtian religion. He expreſsly aſſerts, that "future rewards and puniſhments are "ſanctions of the evangelical law *;" That "it was part of the "original revelation.——And when the Chriſtians adopted this "doctrine, they received the new law and the new ſanction "together on the faith of the ſame revelation †." And indeed it cannot be denied, that this is a doctrine ſtrongly and moſt expreſsly inſiſted on by our bleſſed Saviour himſelf, as a doctrine of principal importance. So that this may be juſtly regarded as a fundamental doctrine of that original Chriſtianity, for which this writer profeſſeth ſo great an eſteem, and the truth, the excellence, and even divinity of which he ſometimes pretends to acknowledge.

The other obſervation is this: that he makes the worſt repreſentation imaginable of this doctrine, as both falſe, and of a pernicious tendency. He aſſerts, that "the double ſanction of rewards "and puniſhments in a future ſtate was, in fact, invented by men. "It appears to be ſo by the evident marks of humanity that cha-"racteriſe it.——That theſe notions favour more of the human "paſſions, than of juſtice or prudence.—That the vulgar hea-"thens believed their Jupiter liable to ſo many human paſſions, "that they might eaſily believe him liable, in his government "of mankind, to thoſe of love and hatred, of anger and ven-"geance.—That the Jews entertained ſuch unworthy notions "of God, and their ſyſtem contained ſuch inſtances of partiality "in love and hatred, of furious anger, and unrelenting ven-"geance, in a long ſeries of arbitrary judgments, that they would "be ready to receive this heathenish doctrine of his arbitrary "and cruel proceedings hereafter.—That accordingly this doc-"trine was in vogue in the Church of Moſes, when that of Jeſus

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 513. † Ibid. p. 516.

"began,

" began.—And that it made a part of the *original Chriſtian reve-*
" *lation* *."—This doctrine he frequently repreſents as not only of human invention, but as abſurd and impious, and even as *blaſphemous;* and he aſſerts, that it is *impoſſible to reconcile it to the divine attributes* †." And after having ſaid that the Jews " blended together at once, in the moral character of God, injuſ-
" tice, cruelty, and partiality," he adds, that " the moral character
" imputed to the Supreme Being by the Chriſtian theology, dif-
" fers little from that imputed to him by the Jewiſh." Yea, he makes it the worſe of the two.——That " ſudden and violent
" anger are imputed to him in the one ſyſtem, ſlow and ſilent
" revenge in the other." That he is repreſented by the latter as
" waiting to puniſh hereafter with unrelenting vengeance and
" eternal torments, when it is too late to terrify, becauſe it is
" too late to reform ‡." Thus he repreſents that which he would have paſs for an eſſential article in the original Chriſtian revelation, as giving a worſe idea of God than the Jewiſh revelation, which yet he pretends makes ſuch a repreſentation of the Deity as is worſe than atheiſm.

I ſhall now examine what he has offered to make good ſo heavy and injurious a charge.

Some of his arguments are deſigned, if they prove any thing at all, to bear againſt future rewards and puniſhments in general; and ſome are particularly levelled againſt the Chriſtian doctrine of future rewards and puniſhments.

As to the former, ſome notice has been already taken of what he had urged to invalidate the belief of a future ſtate of retribution. I ſhall not repeat what has been offered above in the eighth Letter to this purpoſe, but ſhall proceed to mention ſome things, which I had occaſion there to inſiſt upon, as they make a part of the argument, as he has managed it, againſt the Chriſtian revelation.

He charges thoſe who aſſert, as Dr. Clarke has done, that " fu-
" ture retributions are neceſſary to ſet the preſent diſorders and
" inequalities right, and to juſtify, upon the whole, the ſcheme
" of providence," as in effect maintaining, that " God acts

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 515, 516. † Ibid.
‡ Ibid. p. 532, 533.

" againſt

"against his attributes, and the perfections of his nature in "one ſyſtem, only to have a reaſon the more for acting agree-"ably to them in another*." He urges, that "it is profane to "inſinuate, much more to affirm peremptorily, that the proceed-"ings of God towards men in the preſent life are unjuſt; and "that if that could be admitted, it would be abſurd to admit that "this may be ſet right, which means, if the words have any "meaning, that this injuſtice muſt ceaſe to be injuſtice on the "received hypothéſis of his proceedings towards man in another "life." And he argues, that "omnipotence itſelf cannot cauſe "that which has been done not to have been done†." The force of this argument depends upon a groſs miſrepreſentation of the ſenſe of thoſe whom he has thought fit to oppoſe. No Chriſtian divines pretend, that God's proceedings towards men in this preſent life are unjuſt. On the contrary, they maintain, that it is juſt and wiſe in God, and ſuitable to the nature of this ſtate of trial and diſcipline, to ſuffer things to go on as they do in their preſent courſe: and that it is agreeable to the order of things, that a ſtate of final retribution ſhould ſucceed. They are far from thinking, that what is now injuſtice will in a future ſtate ceaſe to be injuſtice: but they maintain, that that juſtice, the execution of which is for very wiſe reaſons delayed, ſhall be exerciſed and diſplayed in the fitteſt ſeaſon: that that puniſhment of the wicked which is not for the preſent inflicted, though deſigned, ſhall be executed, when it is moſt proper it ſhould be ſo: and that reward of the righteous, which is not as yet actually conferred, ſhall be conferred when it is fitteſt it ſhould be conferred, and when they are beſt prepared for receiving it. They aſſert, that the evils and ſufferings which good men endure in this preſent ſtate are perfectly conſiſtent with the divine juſtice, becauſe they are either ſent as chaſtiſements and corrections for their ſins and miſcarriages, or as ſeaſonable trials for the exerciſe and improvement of their virtues, and to diſcipline them for a better world; and that in a future ſtate the trial ſhall be over, and their virtue fully rewarded, and they ſhall arrive at the true felicity and perfection of their nature: and on the other hand, that wicked perſons are here often ſuf-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 356. † Ibid. p. 493, 494.

fered

fered to proſper, and have many advantages and benefits given them, to lead them to repentance, and to anſwer many wiſe ends of providence. And if they prove incorrigible to the methods of diſcipline which are here made uſe of, thoſe puniſhments which were here deferred, ſhall be at length inflicted, and God's righteouſneſs, and juſt deteſtation againſt ſin, ſhall be awfully manifeſted and diſplayed.

But it is eſpecially againſt future puniſhments that he bends his force. He obſerves, that " the heathen philoſophers, even " thoſe of them who aſſumed providence to be the moſt active " in directing the affairs of this world, were unanimous in their " opinion, that the Supreme Being was never angry, nor ever " did harm;" for which he cites a paſſage from Tully's *Offices*, lib. 3: *Num iratum timemus Jovem? At hoc quidem commune eſt omnium philoſophorum—Nunquam nec iraſci Deum, nec nocere**. It will be eaſily allowed, that anger, ſtrictly ſpeaking, as it ſignifies a paſſionate emotion, ſuch as is to be found in ſuch imperfect creatures as we are, cannot be aſcribed to God; but to deny that he is diſpleaſed or offended with the ſins of his creatures, which is all that is intended, when anger is aſcribed to him in the ſacred writings, is really to ſtrike at the foundation of all religion, and, under pretence of honourable thoughts of God, to baniſh the fear of a Deity out of the world. It was a maxim of the Epicureans concerning the divine nature,

Nec bene promeritis capitur, nec tangitur ira,

And their deſign in it was to deny the providence of God, and to repreſent him as abſolutely unconcerned about the actions of men, ſo as neither to reward the good, nor to puniſh evil-doers. And this, if it holdeth at all, will equally hold againſt God's puniſhing the wicked in this life, and in the next. And it looks as if this was our author's intention. He urges, that " neither " reaſon nor experience will ſhew us, in the Author of nature, " an angry, revengeful judge, or bloody executioner†." But to miſcal things does not alter their nature. It is eaſy to throw a hard name, and to call juſtice vengeance and cruelty: but no argument can be drawn from this to prove, that that which is

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 510. † Ibid. p. 209.

one of the moſt glorious perfections, and inſeparable from the wiſe and righteous Governor of the world, ought to paſs for the worſt of characters. If the Supreme Being be not utterly indifferent to virtue and vice, to good and evil, to the happineſs and miſery of his creatures, it muſt be ſaid that he approveth the one, and is diſpleaſed with the other; and in that caſe he will ſhew his approbation and diſpleaſure by ſuitable effects. What ſhould we think of an earthly prince, that ſhould not concern himſelf whether his laws be obſerved or not, and ſhould ſuffer them to be tranſgreſſed with impunity? And is this the idea we ſhould form of the Supreme Lord of the univerſe? If this were the caſe, what could be expected but univerſal diſorder and confuſion in the moral world? It is the ſame thing, as if all things were left to a wild chance, without a Supreme Governor and Judge.

There is a very extraordinary way of arguing which this writer makes uſe of to ſet aſide future puniſhments. He obſerves, that "to aſſume that the divine providence towards mankind in "this world has one criterion, and in the next another, would "be extravagant*:" and therefore he mentions it as an abſurdity in the Chriſtian ſcheme, that "the proceedings of the future "ſtate ſhall be the very reverſe of the preſent; for then every "individual human creature is to be tried; whereas here they are "only conſidered collectively; that the moſt ſecret actions, nay "the very thoughts of the heart, will be laid open, and ſentence "will be pronounced accordingly†." The plain meaning of this is, that the individuals of mankind ſhall not be obnoxious to any puniſhment from God, either in this world or in the next; and conſequently that there ſhall be no exerciſe of divine juſtice here or hereafter. For he himſelf declares, that "juſtice re-"quires, that rewards and puniſhments ſhould be meaſured out "in various degrees, according to the various circumſtances of "particular caſes, and in proportion to them." He has endeavoured to turn that into an argument againſt the Chriſtian account of a future judgment, which is really its glory, and a great proof of its truth, *viz.* that men's ſecret actions, and even the thoughts of their hearts, ſhall then be laid open. Theſe are things

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 498. † Ibid. p. 494.

that

that lie quite out of the reach of human judicatories, and yet upon theſe it is that the morality of actions doth properly depend. If therefore, there be no account to be given of them here or hereafter, men's beſt or worſt actions or diſpoſitions will go unrewarded or unpuniſhed, which is the higheſt abſurdity, ſuppoſing there is a Supreme moral Governor or Judge. But according to the account given us in the goſpel, *the ſecrets of all hearts ſhall be revealed*, the hidden ſprings ſhall be inquired into, from whence good and evil actions flow, men ſhall be ſhewn in their true characters, no real good action ſhall paſs unrewarded, or evil one unpuniſhed; than which nothing can poſſibly have a greater influence to engage us to exerciſe a conſtant care over our inward temper, and our outward conduct.

Another argument he makes uſe of, which, as far as it is of any force, bears againſt future puniſhments in general: it is this: that "reparation and terror are objects eſſential to the conſtitu-"tion of human juſtice. But what does that juſtice require, if "it may be called juſtice, when it tends neither to reparation "nor terror*?" He acknowledges, what ſome engaged in the ſame cauſe have thought fit to deny, that "to reform offenders "is not the ſole nor the principal end of puniſhment. Thoſe "that are capital muſt have ſome other. The criminal is exe-"cuted for the ſake of others, and that he may do ſome good by "the terror of his death. The prince that ſhould puniſh with-"out regard to reparation or terror, could have no motive to "puniſh but the pleaſure of puniſhing; which no ſpirit but that "of anger, vengeance, or cruelty, can inſpire." He aſks therefore, "what effects can puniſhments have, when the ſyſtem of "human government is at an end, the ſtate of probation is over, "when there is no farther means for reformation of the wicked, "nor reparation to the injured by thoſe who injured them, and "when the eternal lots of all mankind are caſt, and terror is of "no farther uſe†? But it is to be conſidered, that the terror of the future puniſhment is of great uſe in this preſent ſtate. The proper deſign of the threatenings of future puniſhment is not to inflict the puniſhment, but to prevent the wickedneſs, and thereby to prevent the puniſhment. But when once thoſe threat-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 494, 495. † Ibid. p. 507, 508.

enings are denounced, juſtice and truth, and the majeſty of the Supreme Ruler, require that they ſhould be ordinarily executed upon thoſe who, notwithſtanding thoſe threatenings, perſiſt in their wicked courſes. For if it were laid down as a principle, that though theſe threatenings were denounced, juſtice or goodneſs would not ſuffer them to be executed, it would be the ſame thing as if there were no threatenings at all; ſince they would in that caſe anſwer no purpoſe, and could not be ſaid to be ſo much as *in terrorem*. But beſides the neceſſity there is that ſuch puniſhments ſhould be threatened here, for the ſake of preſerving order, and reſtraining wickedneſs among mankind, even in this preſent ſtate, and conſequently, that they ſhould be executed hereafter upon thoſe that have incurred the threatened penalties, of what uſe the execution of them may be to other orders of beings in a future ſtate, to inſpire an abhorrence of ſin, and a fear of the divine majeſty, and how far the influence of them may extend, no man can take upon him to determine. The ſcripture intimates, as if the future judgment were to be tranſacted in a moſt ſolemn manner, in the view not merely of the whole human race, but of other orders of intelligent beings. Mention is often made of great numbers of angels as preſent on that occaſion. Thoſe puniſhments may therefore be of very extenſive uſe, for any thing that can be proved to the contrary, for promoting the general good, for diſplaying the evil of ſin, and vindicating the majeſty of the divine laws and government, and may ſerve as ſolemn warnings to the intellectual creation. God takes no pleaſure in their torments, as ſuch, but in anſwering the great ends of his government, in taking the propereſt methods to promote the good of the whole, in the exerciſe and diſplay of his own infinite righteouſneſs and purity, in ſeparating the juſt from the unjuſt, and putting a viſible eternal diſcrimination between the obſtinate oppoſers of his authority and goodneſs, and thoſe who loved and ſerved him in ſincerity.

When this writer reckoneth *reparation* among the ends of puniſhment, he ſeemeth by reparation to mean only the repairing the injuries done by one creature to another; as if all the malignity and demerit of ſin conſiſted only in its being a wrong done to our fellow creatures; and as if it were not to be conſidered or puniſhed at all as an offence againſt the divine majeſty, and a violation

violation of the laws of the ſupreme univerſal Lord. But this is a great miſtake. Sin is indeed a great evil, conſidered as an offence committed againſt our fellow-creatures, and againſt the true dignity, perfection, and happineſs of our own natures, and a counteracting the proper end and order of our beings; but the principal part of its malignity is its being an inſurrection againſt the majeſty and authority of the great Lord of the univerſe, to whom we owe all poſſible ſubjection and obedience, an oppoſing our wills and appetites to the will and law of the Supreme, the baſeſt ingratitude to his infinite goodneſs, a caſting an indignity on his adorable perfections, and on the wiſdom and righteouſneſs of his government, and therefore a breach of univerſal order. This is what renders ſin principally criminal and odious, and what we ought to have a chief regard to in our humble confeſſions, or elſe we are not true penitents. And as it is in this that its malignity chiefly conſiſteth, as God would have us abhor it principally on this account, ſo it is on this account eſpecially that he puniſheth it: for he judgeth of things as they really are. If the greateſt evil of ſin conſiſteth in its being an offence committed againſt the divine majeſty, a wilful tranſgreſſion of his known laws, and an oppoſition to his authority and goodneſs; if the more there is of this in any ſin, the more heinous its guilt muſt be acknowledged to be; if this carrieth an infinitely greater, a more monſtrous malignity in it, than its being merely an offence againſt creatures like ourſelves; it is contrary to all the dictates of reaſon and good ſenſe to ſuppoſe, that the moſt wiſe and righteous Governor of the world, in puniſhing ſin, hath not principally a regard to that, on the account of which it principally deſerveth puniſhment. It is true that God cannot be really hurt by our ſins and vices, nor beatified by our obedience and our virtues. But this is only owing to the tranſcendent excellence of his own moſt perfect nature. And it would be a ſtrange thing to make the infinite perfection of his nature a reaſon why his creatures ſhould be allowed to tranſgreſs his laws with impunity. On the contrary, the greater the excellency of his nature is, the greater is the evil of ſin as committed againſt his infinite majeſty; and that very perfection of his nature makes it impoſſible for him not to hate all moral evil. For it is manifeſt, that an eternal love of order, purity, and righteouſneſs, is neceſſarily included in

infinite perfection. And how ſhall he ſhew his juſt abhorrence of ſin, and averſion to the breach of moral order, but by the marks and effects of his diſpleaſure againſt it, that is, by puniſhing obſtinate preſumptuous tranſgreſſors?

Our author tells us, that "future puniſhments were not believed by the philoſophers, not even by Plato and Pythagoras, "though they talked of them*." And that "at the coming of "our Saviour they were generally diſregarded even by the vulgar." If this were ſo, it became the more neceſſary to renew the diſcovery, and ſet it in a clearer and ſtronger light, ſince it was of vaſt importance to mankind to believe it. By his own acknowledgment, the ableſt philoſophers and legiſlators thought ſo. And he himſelf frequently owns the great uſefulneſs of this doctrine. And its uſefulneſs is, as I have before obſerved, in conjunction with other conſiderations, no ſmall argument of its truth.

Having conſidered what he hath offered with relation to future rewards and puniſhments in general, I ſhall now examine the particular objections he hath urged againſt the accounts given of them in the Chriſtian revelation.

He obſerves, that "had the doctrine of future rewards and "puniſhments been more general, and leſs deſcriptive; had future "puniſhments been repreſented like the rewards, to be ſimply "ſuch as eye never ſaw, nor heard, nor the heart of man could "conceive, it might have been maintained in credit, and have "had an univerſal and real influence—perhaps to the great "advantage of religion. But beſides the abſurdity of ſuppoſing "that God inflicts eternal puniſhments on his creatures, which "would render their non-exiſtence infinitely preferable to their "exiſtence on the whole;" he apprehends that "an air of ridi-"cule has been caſt on this doctrine by preſerving all the idle "tales and burleſque images, which were propagated in thoſe "days." He repreſents it as "nearly reſembling the *mythologia* "*de infernis*, which has been ſo often laughed at†." As to the account given us in the goſpel of the future reward, it is incomparably noble and excellent, and not quite ſo general as he repreſents it, but ſuch as is fitted to raiſe in us the higheſt ideas

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 513. † Ibid. p. 544.

of

of the felicity and perfection to which good men ſhall be raiſed in the heavenly world. The deſcriptions there ſet before us of future puniſhments are general, but very expreſſive. And the burleſque images he ſpeaks of are awful and ſtriking repreſentations, deſigned and fitted to convey images of terror, but not mixed with any trifling or ridiculous circumſtances, like the poetical tales and fables he refers to.

But what he ſeems to lay a principal ſtreſs upon, for expoſing the Chriſtian doctrine of future rewards and puniſhments, is this: that "juſtice requires moſt certainly that rewards and puniſh-"ments ſhould be meaſured out in every particular caſe, in pro-"portion to the merit and demerit of each individual. But in-"ſtead of this, it is aſſured, that the righteous and the wicked are "tranſported into heaven, or plunged into hell, without any "diſtinction of the particular caſes which have been ſo ſolemnly "determined, and without any proportion obſerved between the "various degrees of merit and demerit in the application of "thoſe rewards and puniſhments *." And in all that he offers in the latter part of the ſixty-eighth of his Fragments and Eſſays, he proceeds upon this ſuppoſition, that "the greateſt and leaſt degree "of virtue ſhall be rewarded, and the greateſt and leaſt degree "of vice puniſhed alike:" And that it is "arbitrary and tyran-"nical to make no diſtinction of perſons in diſſimilar caſes †." And again he urges, that "the hypotheſis of all being ſaved alike, "or damned in the lump, tends to deſtroy little by little all thoſe "impreſſions which the belief of a future ſtate is ſo uſefully de-"ſigned to give ‡."

All that his Lordſhip here offers depends upon a great miſ-apprehenſion, or a wilful miſrepreſentation of the Chriſtian doc-trine on this head. If men were to be rewarded and puniſhed hereafter only collectively, and no regard had to individuals, which our author would perſuade us is the method of God's proceedings towards mankind in this preſent ſtate, then it might be admitted that men are ſaved and damned only *in the lump*, as he is pleaſed to expreſs it. But this is not the ſcripture re-preſentation of God's proceedings in a future ſtate. We are there moſt expreſsly aſſured, that the caſe of every individual

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 495. † Ibid. p. 496. ‡ Ibid. p. 503.

ſhall be examined and judged. It is thus that our Lord, who is to be our judge, repreſents it: he tells us, that he will *come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him, and then ſhall he reward every man according to his works*, Mat. xvi. 27. St. Paul expreſsly declares, that *God will render to every man according to his deeds*, Rom. ii. 6. That *every one of us ſhall give an account of himſelf to God*, Rom. xiv. 12. That *we muſt all appear before the judgment ſeat of Chriſt, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*, 2 Cor. v. 10. That *every man's work ſhall be tried, and made manifeſt*, 1 Cor. iii. 13. In ſpeaking of the reſpective duties of maſters and ſervants, he lets them know, that the meaneſt ſhall not be neglected, but ſhall receive a proper reward: That *whatſoever good thing a man doth, the ſame ſhall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free: But he that doth wrong, ſhall receive for the wrong which he hath done, and there is no reſpect of perſons*, Eph. vi. 8. 9. Col. iii. 25. St. Peter aſſureth us, that *God without reſpect of perſons judgeth according to every man's work*, 1 Pet. i. 17. Chriſt is introduced as declaring, *I am he which ſearcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works*, Rev. ii. 23. And in the deſcription of the future judgment, Rev. xx. 12. to ſhew the exactneſs of that judgment, it is ſaid, that *the books were opened, and the dead were judged out of thoſe things which were written in the books according to their works*. And it is repeated again, ver. 13. they *were judged, every man according to their works*.

From theſe ſeveral paſſages compared together, it appears with the utmoſt evidence, that according to the whole tenor of the New Teſtament, in the diſpenſing future retributions, *the rewards and puniſhments ſhall be meaſured out in every particular caſe, in proportion to the merit and demerit of each individual*, which our author ſaith is what juſtice requires. It is therefore manifeſt, that what is there ſaid concerning that future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, muſt be underſtood in a conſiſtency with the making an exact diſtribution according to particular caſes and circumſtances; and that the general repreſentations there made of heaven as a ſtate of future happineſs to the righteous, and of hell as a ſtate of future puniſhment to the wicked, muſt

be

be ſo taken and explained as to comport with the different degrees of rewards and puniſhments to the one and to the other; and not as if all good men were to be raiſed to the ſame degree of future glory and happineſs; and all bad men to be puniſhed with the ſame degree of miſery; ſince it is ſo frequently and expreſsly declared, that God will then, without reſpect of perſons, render to every man according to his deeds; and that every man ſhall then receive according to what he hath done in the body. The general deſcriptions of that future glory are indeed ſublime and noble, and repreſent it in a moſt attractive view. And it was proper it ſhould be ſo. They ſet before us a happineſs beyond imagination great and glorious, the more effectually to animate us to a patient continuance in well-doing. And it is ſignified, that it is of ſuch a nature, ſo tranſcendently great and excellent, as vaſtly to exceed what any of the human race could in ſtrictneſs of juſtice have deſerved. For the obedience of the beſt of men is very imperfect, and mixed with many defects; and therefore that eternal life and happineſs is repreſented as the *gift of God, through Jeſus Chriſt.* That reward is the effect of free ſovereign grace and goodneſs. And therefore none can find fault, if the glory and happineſs which ſhall be conferred upon good men hereafter be above what they could be ſaid to have ſtrictly merited. But though the very loweſt degree of reward and happineſs in that future ſtate ſhall be far ſuperior to what the beſt of men could have pretended to have challenged, as in ſtrictneſs of juſtice due to his merits, yet God ſhall ſo order it, in his infinite wiſdom and righteouſneſs, that there ſhall be an admirable proportion obſerved in giving different degrees of glory, according to the different proficiencies men had made in real goodneſs during their ſtate of trial. Nothing can be clearer to this purpoſe than our Saviour's determination, in the parable of the pounds, Luke xix. 12. 20. where he repreſents higher honours and rewards conferred upon ſome than upon others, according to their different degrees of uſefulneſs, and the different improvements they had made of what was committed to them. And in the bleſſings he pronounceth upon thoſe that are perſecuted for righteouſneſs ſake, he plainly intimates, that they ſhould be diſtinguiſhed with a higher reward in heaven than many others, in proportion to their greater ſufferings and ſervices. And in

general

general he declares, that in his *Father's houſe are many manſions*; which ſuppoſes that there ſhall be different abodes provided for good men in that future world, into which they ſhall be diſtributed, each of them happy in their ſeveral ways, and each contented with the lot aſſigned them. But no-where are we particularly told, what ſhall be the loweſt degree of happineſs and reward which ſhall be conferred on the loweſt degrees of real virtue and righteouſneſs, nor would ſuch a diſcovery be of any uſe to mankind, or anſwer any valuable purpoſe.

As to future puniſhments, in the inflicting of theſe the ſtricteſt regard ſhall be had to the rules of juſtice, ſo that no man ſhall be puniſhed beyond his demerits. This inconteſtably follows from the frequent declarations that are made, and which have been already produced, that God will render to every man according to his deeds, without reſpect of perſons. But beſides theſe general declarations, there are ſeveral paſſages of Scripture which are deſigned to ſhew, that there ſhall be a remarkable difference made between ſome bad men and others in the puniſhments inflicted on them; and that in the inflicting theſe puniſhments, a regard ſhall be had to the different aggravations of their crimes. This is what our Lord plainly ſignifies, when he declares with great ſolemnity, that it *ſhall be more tolerable for Sadom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment*, that is, for the moſt profligate parts of the heathen world, than for thoſe that obſtinately rejected and abuſed the goſpel offers of mercy and ſalvation, and who go on in an obſtinate courſe of preſumptuous ſin and diſobedience, in oppoſition to the cleareſt light and moſt glorious advantages. And again, he declares, that *that ſervant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himſelf, neither did according to his will, ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of ſtripes, ſhall be beaten with few ſtripes. For unto whomſoever much is given, of him ſhall much be required: and to whom men have committed much, of him will they aſk the more*, Luke xii. 47, 48. Nothing can be plainer than it is from this repreſentation, that among thoſe who ſhall be puniſhed in a future ſtate, great difference ſhall be made in the degrees of puniſhment inflicted on them, according to their different demerits; and that an exact conſideration ſhall be had of their ſeveral caſes, and an equitable

proportion

proportion ſhall be obſerved, and all proper allowances made. The general deſcriptions therefore of theſe future puniſhments are to be interpreted in a conſiſtency with ſuppoſing a very great difference made between ſome and others in the degrees of their puniſhment. In theſe general deſcriptions, the ſtrongeſt images of terror are made uſe of, and it is highly proper it ſhould be ſo. The puniſhments are deſcribed in their higheſt degree, as they ſhall be inflicted on the moſt obſtinate and heinous offenders. No-where are we particularly told what ſhall be the loweſt degree of puniſhment which ſhall be inflicted in that future world; nor what that ſtate of vice and guilt is which ſhall ſubject men to the leaſt puniſhment. Such declarations could anſwer no good end, and would probably be abuſed. It is more wiſely done to leave that matter in general expreſſions; at the ſame time aſſuring us, that every man ſhall be puniſhed in a ſtrict proportion to the circumſtances of his crime.

A due conſideration of this will in a great meaſure obviate the principal objections this author hath urged againſt the eternal duration of that future puniſhment, which depend principally upon this ſuppoſition, that all ſhall be alike ſubjected to the moſt extreme degree of torment and miſery, and ſo ſhall continue for ever: whereas if it be conſidered, that there ſhall be a great difference made between ſome and others, in that future world; that the ſtate of ſome ſhall be tolerable, compared with that of others; and that every man's caſe ſhall be conſidered, and his condition wiſely and exactly proportioned to what he had deſerved; on this ſuppoſition, whatever the duration of it is ſuppoſed to be, it is ſtill juſt.

Here it will not be improper to take notice of a remarkable paſſage of this writer in relation to this preſent ſubject. He ſays, "he could eaſily perſuade himſelf, that the mercy of God par-"dons the offenders who amend, conſiſtently with his juſtice; "for elſe, as all men offend, all men would be puniſhed; and "that his goodneſs may carry on the work his mercy has begun, "and place ſuch as are the objects of both in a ſtate where they "will be exempt perhaps eternally from all natural, and, as much "as finite creatures can be, from all moral evil. He could per-"ſuade himſelf, that they who are the objects of neither, and "are not therefore pardoned, remain, if they do remain, exclud-

"ed

" ed from the happineſs of the others, and reduced to a forlorn " ſtate. Some ſuch hypotheſis, where no certainty is to be had, " I could admit," ſays he, " as probable, becauſe it contradicts " none of the divine attributes, ſets none of them at variance, " nor breaks their harmony." Here he ſuppoſes it to be a probable hypotheſis, and perfectly conſiſtent with the divine attributes, not only that ſome men, who are the proper objects of the divine goodneſs and mercy, may continue eternally in a happy ſtate exempt from all evil; but that others, who by their conduct have rendered themſelves not the proper objects of the divine mercy, may be debarred from pardon, and may remain, whilſt they do remain, and conſequently may remain eternally, ſuppoſing them to continue in eternal exiſtence, excluded from that happineſs which the others enjoy, and reduced to a forlorn ſtate. If therefore we be aſſured by a well-atteſted revelation, that this ſhall really be the caſe, he ought not to object againſt it.

But he urges, that " it is abſurd to ſuppoſe, that our ſtate of " probation ends with this preſent life, and that judgment will " be determined by what we have done in this ſtate.—And that " a virtue or wickedneſs of fifty or ſixty years, ſhould be reward- " ed with eternal happineſs, or puniſhed with eternal miſery *." The objection that is drawn from the diſproportion there is between the duration of the ſtate of trial, and the eternity that is to ſucceed it, might be made, whatever we ſuppoſe the continuance of the time of trial to be. But the ſhortneſs of this ſtate of trial furniſheth a powerful conſideration to engage us to improve it. And very probably, if it were ordinarily much longer than it is, the condition of mankind might be worſe, in the preſent corrupt ſtate of the human nature, than it now is; as the length of men's lives before the flood probably contributed to the wickedneſs that ſo much abounded. The argument therefore, as far as there is any weight in it, holdeth againſt the ſuppoſing any ſtate of trial at all, of whatever continuance. But do we know enough of the meaſures and deſigns of the divine government, to be able to pronounce, that it may not be worthy of God, as the Supreme Governor of the world, to appoint to his reaſonable creatures a ſtate of trial and diſcipline, and to deal with them according to

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 493. 504, 505.

their

their behaviour in ſuch a ſtate, and let them know, that if they obſtinately perſiſt in their rebellion and diſobedience, he will at length ſhut up his grace from them, and they ſhall be excluded from that glory and felicity, with which he would have bountifully rewarded their perſeverance in a courſe of piety and virtue during the time of trial allotted them? It may be left to impartial reaſon, whether this conſtitution would not be more wiſely ordained, and more likely to promote the intereſts of virtue and good order in the world, and to repreſs vice and wickedneſs, than to ſet no bounds at all to the offers of his mercy, and to aſſure them, that let them behave ever ſo wickedly and preſumptuouſly, and abuſe and reject all the methods of his grace, yet ſtill after they leave this world, and at any other time throughout eternity, whenever they repent, they ſhall be forgiven, and even reſtored to favour, and raiſed to glory and felicity? Would this be a rule of government worthy of the divine wiſdom, or fit to be publiſhed throughout the whole intellectual world?

As reaſon leads us to conclude, that it is neceſſary, for anſwering the great ends of moral government, that puniſhments ſhould be denounced againſt the obſtinate tranſgreſſors of the divine laws, ſo it may be juſtly doubted whether to creatures deſigned for an immortal exiſtence, the threatening of none but temporary puniſhments would be ſufficient; eſpecially if they apprehended that they ſhould outlive thoſe puniſhments for infinite ages in bliſs and glory. It certainly becometh us, in our inquiries concerning ſuch matters as theſe, to proceed with great modeſty, ſince we cannot pretend of ourſelves to be proper judges of what the governing wiſdom and righteouſneſs of the Supreme Lord of the univerſe doth require, and what is moſt worthy of God, and moſt for the good of the whole, which is of far greater importance than the intereſts of particular beings.

To conſider the ſentence which ſhall paſs upon bad men at the great day of judgment, as final and irreverſible; and that after this there ſhall be no freſh offers of grace and mercy, but they ſhall continue under the effects of that ſentence during the whole of their exiſtence; is certainly a conſideration of the higheſt moment, and muſt needs have a wonderful weight to engage us to make the beſt uſe of the preſent ſtate of trial allotted us, and to lay hold on the offers of ſalvation that are now made to us upon

upon the reaſonable terms of the new covenant. Whereas if we had reaſon to apprehend, that there were to be new ſtates of trial, new ſeaſons and offers of grace, after the general judgment, it would greatly weaken the influence of the motives drawn from the threatenings of future puniſhment. Nor is there any thing in this conſtitution which can be proved to be inconſiſtent with the wiſdom, juſtice, and equity of the divine government. For as to the excluſion from the heavenly felicity, which ſhall be a conſiderable part of that future puniſhment, there is no reaſonable ground for expecting, that thoſe who now reject the divine grace and mercy ſhould ever be admitted to that tranſcendent bliſs and glory, which God hath been pleaſed of his own free and rich goodneſs to promiſe to the righteous, and which no man could pretend to challenge as in ſtrictneſs of juſtice due to him. Nor is it any impeachment of the divine wiſdom and goodneſs to leave obſtinate ſinners during the whole courſe of their exiſtence under that part of the puniſhment which ariſeth from the ſtinging reflections of their own guilty conſciences, or from the natural effects of their wickedneſs and bad temper of mind. And whatever farther puniſhments there may be more directly and immediately inflicted by the divine hand, we may be ſure they ſhall be in ſuch meaſures and proportions to each individual, as never to exceed the demerit of their crimes.

"What has been ſaid may help us to judge of the ſtrange repreſentation this author is pleaſed to make of the Scripture doctrine of future puniſhments: That "ſuch a proceeding can be aſcribed "to no principle, but to the revenge of a being, who puniſhes "to the full extent of his power, and merely for the pleaſure of "puniſhing, and without any regard to juſtice, creatures who "did not offend him, merely for the pleaſure of offending him; "creatures who had free-will, and made wrong elections; crea-"tures who might plead, in mitigation of their puniſhments, their "frailties, their paſſions, the imperfections of their natures, and "the numerous temptations to which they ſtood expoſed*." This repreſentation is unjuſt in every article. The tendency of it is plainly this: to apologize for ſin, and to diminiſh the evil of it. And what good can be propoſed by this, it is hard to ſay.

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 518.

Nothing

Nothing can be more contrary to the honour of God, to the good of mankind, to the peace and order of the moral world, than to endeavour to make men entertain ſlight thoughts of the evil of ſin. To what purpoſe is it to ſay, that ſinners do not offend God merely for the pleaſure of offending him? If they do it for the pleaſure of gratifying their own corrupt inclinations and appetites, which they oppoſe and prefer to the moſt wiſe and holy will and law of the ſovereign Lord of the univerſe, is not this a very heinous guilt? Their having free-will, and making wrong elections, when it was in their choice to have done otherwiſe, though mentioned here in mitigation of their guilt, is a great aggravation of their crime, and an abuſe of their reaſon and liberty, which are amongſt the nobleſt gifts of God. To plead paſſions and temptations, is an excuſe, which, if admitted, may ſerve to apologize for the greateſt crimes. But they are not allowed by any wiſe human judicatories as a reaſon for exempting thoſe that tranſgreſs the laws from the penalties to which their tranſgreſſions had expoſed them. And Lord Bolingbroke himſelf has elſewhere very properly obſerved, that thoſe very perſons who pretend that inclinations cannot be reſtrained, and who ſpeak moſt of the power of the appetites and paſſions, can reſiſt and controul them, when any evident intereſt, or contrary inclination, leads them to do ſo*. And as to any tranſgreſſions that may properly be called frailties and infirmities, and which have little of the will in them, the wiſe and juſt Ruler of the world will no doubt make all the allowances that equity can demand.

Upon the whole, the Chriſtian doctrine of future rewards and puniſhments is ſo far from furniſhing a juſt objection againſt the divine original of the goſpel revelation, that, if rightly conſidered, it yieldeth a noble evidence of its uſefulneſs and truth. It is ſcarce poſſible to form an idea of any thing more ſolemn and affecting, and better fitted to make a ſtrong impreſſion on the human mind, than the repreſentation given in the New Teſtament of the future judgment. The whole human race convened before the ſovereign univerſal Judge, innumerable myriads of holy angels attending, the judicial proceſs carried on with the

* See his Letters on the Study and Uſe of Hiſtory, let. iii. ſect. 1.

greateſt

greateſt ſolemnity, a ſtrict and impartial inquiry made, the moſt hidden actions brought to light, and the very ſecrets of the heart laid open, and all followed by eternal retributions. It ſeemeth plain from our Saviour's manner of repreſenting things, that he regarded it as a matter of great importance, that ſinners ſhould have no hope or expectation given them of obtaining mercy and ſalvation, if they perſiſted to the end of this preſent life in a courſe of impenitence, preſumptuous ſin, and diſobedience. He nowhere giveth the leaſt intimation, that the puniſhment of the wicked in a future ſtate ſhall have an end. On the contrary, he ſtill ſpeaketh of it in terms, which, according to the natural import of the expreſſions, ſeem to ſignify that it ſhall be of a perpetual duration, without adding any thing to qualify thoſe expreſſions. And for any perſons to flatter themſelves, that God may in his abſolute ſovereignty diſpenſe with the rigour of his threatenings, and to depend upon ſuch an expectation, would be an extreme folly, when the plain tenor of the revelation ſeems to go the other way.

I have now finiſhed the deſign I had in view, which was to defend natural and revealed religion againſt the attacks made upon both by this very confident and aſſuming author. In the execution of this deſign, I have principally confined myſelf to the reaſoning part of his Lordſhip's works, as far as religion is concerned, and have not willingly overlooked any thing that had the appearance of argument. But I have not attempted to follow him in ſeveral of thoſe excurſions which ſeem to have been principally intended to ſhew the variety of his reading, of which it muſt be owned there is a great appearance, though I cannot ſay he has given many proofs of his having maturely digeſted it. Several things there are in his ſcheme of metaphyſics, and in the account he has given of the ſentiments of the ancient philoſophers, which might be juſtly animadverted upon, though it will not be denied that ſome of his obſervations on theſe heads are juſt and curious. But as a diſtinct examination of them would have very much enlarged this work, which is already longer than I at firſt intended, or than I would have wiſhed it to be, I have choſen to omit them: for the ſame reaſon I have taken no particular notice of the reflections he has occaſionally caſt upon the ancient

ancient fathers of the Chriſtian Church, and upon the body of the primitive Chriſtians*, of whom he has made a moſt injurious repreſentation, and has in effect juſtified the perſecutions raiſed by the heathens againſt them. He tells us, that "their clergy "were, under pretence of religion, a very lawleſs tribe.—That "they broke the laws in the moſt public manner, and inſtigated "others to break them, by popular inſurrections againſt the au- "thority of magiſtrates, and by tumults and riots, in which they "inſulted the eſtabliſhed religion of the empire.—And he be- "lieves the liſt of the martyrs conſiſted more of thoſe who ſuf- "fered for breaking the peace, than of thoſe who ſuffered quietly "for the ſake of their religion†." Such is the charge he has thought fit to bring againſt a worthy and peaceable body of men (for ſo the primitive Chriſtians generally were), whoſe innocent and virtuous behaviour has been acknowledged by ſome of their pagan adverſaries themſelves.

You will obſerve, that I have, for the moſt part, except where the argument led to it, paſſed over the bitter ſarcaſms he ſo fre-

* As a ſpecimen how ready our author is to lay hold of the ſlighteſt appearances for caſting a ſlur upon the ancient fathers and primitive Chriſtians, I would obſerve, that after mentioning the Gnoſtics, and their pretences, he adds, that "the orthodox grew in time as much Gnoſtics as others; "and we ſee that the church of Alexandria thought it neceſſary to be ſo, in "order to be truly religious *." He is ſo fond of this thought, that he afterwards repeateth it, and talks of the "heretics aſſuming the pompous title "of Gnoſtics, and deſpiſing the firſt preachers of Chriſtianity, as ignorant "and illiterate men: And that Clement of Alexandria maintained, that to "be a good Chriſtian it was neceſſary to be a good Gnoſtic†." It would be hard to produce an inſtance of greater diſingenuity than Lord Bolingbroke is here guilty of, and it can ſcarce be ſuppoſed that he was ſo ignorant as not to be ſenſible of it. The word Gnoſtic properly ſignifies a man of knowledge. Some corrupters of Chriſtianity in the primitive times, who made high pretences to extraordinary knowledge, aſſumed that title to themſelves. And becauſe Clement deſcribes the true Gnoſtics in oppoſition to the falſe, to ſhew that this name, in which thoſe heretics gloried, belonged in its juſt ſenſe only to the true Chriſtian; therefore he and the orthodox Chriſtians were Gnoſtics, *i. e.* of the ſame principles and practices with that ſect which they condemned. It may be ſafely left to the reader to judge of the fairneſs of ſuch a conduct.

* *Lord Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 336.* † *Ibid. iv. p. 458.*

† Lord Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 434.

quently throws out againſt the Chriſtian divines. They have the honour to be reviled and inſulted in every work that is deſigned againſt revealed religion. But it muſt be owned, that his Lordſhip has in obloquy and reproach far exceeded all that have gone before him. He has found out, what the world did not know before, that the divines are in a formed alliance and confederacy with the atheiſts againſt God and his providence, and that the latter are not ſuch dangerous enemies to religion as the former.

I have not thought myſelf obliged to take any diſtinct notice of the long account he has given in his fourth eſſay, of the encroachments of the eccleſiaſtical upon the civil power, and the ſeveral ſteps by which thoſe encroachments were carried on, eſpecially in the times of the papal uſurpation. He has advanced little on theſe heads that can be called new, or which had not been obſerved by others before him. And we have his Lordſhip's own acknowledgment frequently repeated, that this is by no means chargeable on true original Chriſtianity. It would therefore be very diſingenuous, to turn that to the diſadvantage of the religion of Jeſus, which has been only owing to a groſs abuſe and corruption of it, a corruption which was plainly foretold in the ſacred writings, at a time when it was impoſſible for any human ſagacity to foreſee it.

He frequently exclaims againſt artificial theology, and complains of the profane mixtures which have been brought into the Chriſtian religion, by the ſubtilties of a vain philoſophy, and by idle traditions. It muſt be acknowledged, that there has often been too much ground for ſuch complaints. And to endeavour to ſeparate pure uncorrupted Chriſtianity, as taught by Chriſt and his apoſtles, from debaſing mixtures and the corrupt additions that have been made to it, is undoubtedly a noble and uſeful work, and, when properly performed, is doing a real ſervice to Chriſtianity, and tendeth to eſtabliſh the credit of it, and to promote its ſacred intereſts. But ſuch writers as Lord Bolingbroke are certainly the unfitteſt perſons in the world to undertake it:

Non tali auxilio, nec defenſoribus iſtis,
Tempus eget.

Inſtead

Inſtead of promoting the good work of reformation, and of contributing to reſtore religion in its primitive purity, they bring a diſgrace upon thoſe who would in good earneſt attempt it, and furniſh the patrons of thoſe corruptions with a plauſible pretence for reproaching and miſrepreſenting ſuch perſons, as having an ill intention againſt Chriſtianity itſelf, and as ſerving the cauſe of deiſts and infidels.

His Lordſhip charges the miſchiefs which have befallen the Chriſtian Church as having been chiefly owing to this: That "the pure word of God neither is nor has been the ſole criterion of orthodoxy *." He aſſerts, that "no human authority "can ſupply or alter, much leſs improve, what the Son of God "came on earth to reveal †." He ſays, that "divines ſhould re-"turn to the Goſpel, as philoſophers have returned to Nature, "and preſume to dogmatize no farther than the plain import of "it will juſtify ‡." And here he recommends it as the moſt effectual way to remove the ſcandals ariſing from the diſſentions among Chriſtians, that the Chriſtian divines "ſhould be content "to explain what they underſtand, to adore what they under-"ſtand not, and to leave in myſtery all that Chriſt and his apoſ-"tles have left ſo §."

Theſe advices, conſidered in themſelves, might have been thought to proceed from a good and friendly intention. But every thing is ſuſpected that comes from ſuch a hand. Yet a real friend to Chriſtianity will know how to make a proper uſe of admonitions and reproofs, even when given by an enemy.

I ſhall conclude with this obſervation: That the religion of Jeſus, as delivered in the New Teſtament in its original purity and ſimplicity, will be ever able to ſtand its ground againſt all the aſſaults of the moſt ſubtile and moſt malicious adverſaries. It hath a dignity and excellence in it, which hath often extorted favourable acknowledgments even from thoſe who have appeared to be ſtrongly prejudiced againſt it, of which we have a remarkable inſtance in the late Lord Bolingbroke. And I am perſuaded, that the more any thinking man conſidereth it with a free and unprejudiced mind, the more he will admire it, and will be the

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 448. † Ibid. p. 627.
‡ Ibid. p. 449. § Ibid. p. 629.

more convinced of its truth and excellence, and of its divine original. You will, I doubt not, join with me in earneſt prayer to God, that this holy religion may be more univerſally diffuſed, that it may be made known to thoſe who know it not, and that where it is known and profeſſed, it may have more of the happy effects which it is ſo well fitted to produce.

I am,

Reverend and dear Sir,

Moſt ſincerely and affectionately yours,

JOHN LELAND.

LET-

LETTER XXXIV.

SIR,

THE foregoing Letter finiſhed, the obſervations I had made on Lord Bolingbroke's poſthumous works. In the courſe of thoſe obſervations, I had occaſion to make ſome references to a ſmall treatiſe I had publiſhed before, intituled, *Reflections on the late Lord Bolingbroke's Letters on the Study and Uſe of Hiſtory*, which was the firſt of his Lordſhip's writings in which he had appeared in an avowed oppoſition to the Chriſtian cauſe. And it having been thought proper to reprint thoſe Reflections, I was adviſed by you and other friends to inſert them in the *Supplement to the View of the Deiſtical Writers*, lately publiſhed, as they bear a near affinity to the ſubjects there treated of, and might render that part which relates to Lord Bolingbroke more complete. For the ſame reaſons theſe Reflections are retained in this new edition of the *View of the Deiſtical Writers*, and are here ſubjoined to the obſervations on the late Lord Bolingbroke's poſthumous works. But whereas in the two firſt editions of thoſe Reflections, beſides the remarks which were made upon thoſe paſſages in his Lordſhip's Letters that relate to Chriſtianity and the holy Scriptures, there were ſeveral things added of a political nature, and which were deſigned to examine and detect his Lordſhip's miſrepreſentations; in the third, fourth, and this edition, it was thought proper not to intermix any thing of a *political nature*, which would not be ſo well ſuited to the deſign of the preſent work. For this reaſon, whereas in the firſt and ſecond editions of theſe Reflections, it was propoſed to diſtribute the remarks into three heads, the third of which related to the ſevere reflections Lord Bolingbroke had made upon the conſequences of the late revolution, and the ſtate of things under the preſent eſtabliſhment; this third head, which in thoſe editions reached from p. 133 to p. 166, is omitted. But there are additions and improvements made in other parts of thoſe Reflections; the moſt conſiderable of which relates to the *curſe pronounced by Noah upon Canaan*,

which, in the opinion of ſome judicious friends, was not ſo fully conſidered before as it ought to have been.

This addition was drawn up, as you know, ſome time ago, and ſent over in order to be inſerted in the new edition of theſe Reflections, before I ſaw Dr. Newton's accurate diſſertation on this ſubject, in his excellent *Diſſertations upon Prophecy*, which came but very lately into my hands. It will now probably be thought not ſo neceſſary; but I have choſen to let it ſtand as it was firſt drawn up, becauſe it may poſſibly not be without its uſe, and will tend to render the *Reflections on Lord Bolingbroke's Letters on the Study and Uſe of Hiſtory* more complete. The method I have purſued is ſomething different from Dr. Newton's. He ſeems to incline to think there is a defect in the *Hebrew copies*. But I chuſe to defend the paſſage according to the preſent reading of the *Hebrew copies*, which is followed by almoſt all the ancient verſions, as well as by our own tranſlators.

The Preface to the Reflections is ſomewhat long; but it was not thought proper to omit it, as it contains ſeveral things, which, in the opinion of ſome whoſe judgment I regard, may be as uſeful as any part of thoſe Reflections.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS

ON THE LATE

LORD BOLINGBROKE's LETTERS

ON THE

STUDY AND USE OF HISTORY:

ESPECIALLY SO FAR AS THEY RELATE TO CHRISTIANITY, AND THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

THE SIXTH EDITION, CORRECTED.

N. B. These *Reflections* were first published in the Year 1753, and before any Part of this *View of the Deistical Writers* was written.

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PRE-

PREFACE.

ALTHOUGH no man needs to make an apology for uſing his beſt endeavours in defence of our common Chriſtianity, when it is openly attacked; yet as my engaging again in this cauſe, after having done it on ſome former occaſions, might have an appearance of too much forwardneſs, it was with ſome reluctance that I was perſuaded to undertake it. What had great weight with me, was the judgment and advice of a perſon of great worth*, of whoſe ſincere friendſhip I have had many proofs, and whom I greatly honour for his truly Chriſtian and candid ſpirit, as well as his zeal for our holy religion. He urged, that it was highly proper to take notice of the contempt and abuſe attempted to be thrown upon Chriſtianity and the holy Scriptures, by a writer of ſo great name, and whoſe ſpecious inſinuations, and confident aſſertions, might probably make diſadvantageous impreſſions upon minds too well prepared to receive them. And, as he had not then heard that any other had undertaken it, or intended to do ſo, he thought my drawing up Remarks on theſe Letters, which had made ſo much noiſe, might be of ſome uſe. This determined me to attempt it; and how far what is now offered is fitted to anſwer the intention, muſt be ſubmitted to the judgment of the public. I am ſenſible of the diſadvantage one is under in appearing againſt a writer of ſo diſtinguiſhed a character as the late

* The Rev. Dr. Thomas Wilſon, Rector of Walbrook, and Prebendary of Weſtminſter.

Lord

Lord Viſcount Bolingbroke. His Lordſhip's admirers will no doubt expect, that a proper decent reſpect ſhould be paid to his great abilities and talents, as well as quality. This I readily acknowledge: but there is certainly a ſtill greater regard due to the honour of Chriſtianity, which he hath unworthily inſulted. However, it is hoped the reader will find, that care has been taken not to tranſgreſs the rules of decency, or to puſh the charge againſt him farther than his own words give juſt ground for; and that angry and reproachful expreſſions have not been made uſe of, even where there ſeemed to be a ſufficient provocation given.

It might have been expected, from a perſon of his Lordſhip's genius, and who ſeems fond of ſaying things which had not been inſiſted upon before, that when he thought fit to appear againſt the authority of the holy Scriptures, and the Chriſtian religion, he would have managed the argument in a different manner, and to greater advantage, than had been done by others in the ſame cauſe before him. But I do not find, that, with all his ſagacity and penetration, he hath advanced any thing on the argument, that can be properly called a new diſcovery; or that he hath given any additional force to the objections which have been urged by others, and to which ſufficient anſwers have been made.

In that part of his Letters, in which he attempteth to expoſe the Scripture hiſtory as falſe and uncertain, there are ſeveral things thrown in, which ſeem rather calculated to ſhew his Lordſhip's reading, than to anſwer the main deſign he appears to have had in view. It would be no difficult matter to point to ſome miſtakes and inaccuracies he hath fallen into. But I have choſen for the moſt part to paſs them by, and confine myſelf to thoſe things that have a nearer relation to the argument.

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Any one that is converſant with thoſe that are called the Deiſtical Writers, muſt have obſerved, that it is very uſual for them to put on an appearance of reſpect for Chriſtianity, at the ſame time that they do all in their power to ſubvert it. In this his Lordſhip hath thought fit to imitate them.

He hath ſometimes expreſſed a ſeeming regard for the holy Scriptures; and hath carried it ſo far as to make a ſhew of owning the divine inſpiration of ſome parts of them. But I believe he would have been loth to have had it thought, that he was in earneſt. It is not eaſy to ſee the juſtice, or even the good ſenſe, of ſuch a conduct; ſince the diſguiſe is too thin to impoſe upon the moſt unwary reader: nor can I ſee what end it can anſwer, but to give one no very good opinion of the writer's ſincerity.

This juſtice, however, muſt be done to the noble author, that he hath brought the controverſy, relating to the divine authority of the Chriſtian religion, into a narrower compaſs than ſome others engaged in the ſame cauſe have ſeemed willing to do. He aſſerteth, that Chriſtianity is a religion founded upon facts; and fairly acknowledgeth, that if the facts can be proved to be true, the divine original and authority of the Chriſtian religion are eſtabliſhed. And what he requireth is, that theſe facts ſhould be proved, as all other paſt facts, that are judged worthy of credit, are proved, viz. by good hiſtorical evidence. This bringeth the controverſy to a ſhort iſſue: for if it can be ſhewn, that the great important facts, recorded in the evangelical writings, have been tranſmitted to us with as much evidence as could be reaſonably expected, ſuppoſing thoſe facts to have been really done; then, by his Lordſhip's conceſſions, and according to his own way of ſtating the caſe, they are to be received as true; and conſequently the Chriſtian religion is of divine authority.

His Lordſhip had too much ſenſe to deny (as ſome have been willing to do) the certainty of all hiſtorical evidence as to paſt facts, or to inſiſt upon ocular demonſtration for things done in former ages. Since therefore the beſt way of knowing and being aſſured of paſt facts, is, by authentic accounts, written and publiſhed in the age in which the facts were done; all that properly remains is, to prove the credibility and authenticity of the goſpel-records; and that they have been tranſmitted to us with ſuch a degree of evidence, as may be ſafely depended upon. And notwithſtanding what his Lordſhip hath inſinuated to the contrary, this hath been often done with great clearneſs and force, by the writers that have appeared on the behalf of Chriſtianity. What is offered in this way in the following Reflections, will, I hope, be judged ſufficient; though I have done little more than point to the heads of things, which might eaſily have been enlarged upon, if I had not been afraid of ſwelling theſe Reflections to too great a bulk.

The chief danger to be apprehended from his Lordſhip's book, appears to me to ariſe from the contemptuous inſinuation he has thrown out againſt Chriſtianity, as if it could not bear the light, or ſtand the teſt of an impartial inquiry, and as if every man of ſenſe that examines into firſt principles without prejudice, muſt immediately ſee through the deluſion. This, from a man of his Lordſhip's known abilities, and fine taſte, may be apt to do miſchief among thoſe, who, without any uncommon abilities, or giving themſelves the trouble of much thinking, yet want to paſs for perſons of extraordinary penetration, and raiſed above vulgar prejudices. But if authority were to decide this cauſe, it were eaſy to produce, on the ſide of Chriſtianity, many great names of perſons, whoſe learning and good ſenſe, and eminent merit, are univerſally acknowledged.

ledged. I ſhall not mention any of the clergy on this occaſion, becauſe they might perhaps be excepted againſt: though, if extenſive knowledge and learning, if depth of thought and exactneſs of judgment, if great candour and probity of manners, or if fineneſs of genius, and elegance of taſte in polite literature, might recommend them as fit to judge in theſe matters, many of them might be named, ſo confeſſedly eminent in all theſe reſpects, as would render them ornaments to any profeſſion in the world. But it may not be improper to mention ſome illuſtrious Laymen, who have either profeſſedly written in defence of Chriſtianity, and the holy Scriptures, or have, in their writings, ſhewn an high eſteem and veneration for them. Of foreigners, among many that might be mentioned to advantage, I ſhall only take notice of the Lord Du Pleſſis Mornay, who was both a very wiſe ſtateſman, and eminently learned; the celebrated M. Paſcal, one of the fineſt writers, and greateſt geniuſes of the laſt age; that extraordinary man, Grotius, not eaſily to be paralleled for force and extent of genius, as well as variety of learning; thoſe great men, the Barons Puffendorf and Ezekiel Spanheim, the former deſervedly admired for his great knowledge of the law of nature and nations, the latter peculiarly eminent for his acquaintance with the Belles Lettres, and refined taſte in the politer parts of learning. To theſe might be added many excellent perſons of our own nation, ſuch as Lord Bacon, Mr. Selden, Sir Charles Wolſely, Sir Matthew Hale, the honourable Robert Boyle, Mr. Locke, Sir Iſaac Newton, Mr. Addiſon, Mr. Forbes the late Lord Preſident of Scotland. I believe there are few but would think it an honour to be ranked with theſe illuſtrious names, ſome of them remarkable for their eminent ſtation and figure in the world, and great political abilities; and all of them juſtly ad-

mired for the extent of their learning and knowledge, the ſolidity of their judgment, or correctneſs of their taſte. And I cannot help, on this occaſion, mentioning two gentlemen (the latter lately deceaſed) of acknowledged learning and fine ſenſe, who have diſtinguiſhed themſelves by their writings in defence of Chriſtianity, Sir George Lyttleton and Mr. Weſt.

No man needs therefore be apprehenſive as if his appearing to ſhew a zeal for Chriſtianity might be looked upon as a reflection upon his underſtanding, or as a mark of a narrow and bigotted way of thinking; ſince it cannot be denied, that ſome of the wiſeſt men, the greateſt geniuſes, and exacteſt reaſoners of the age, have been perſons that profeſſed an high regard for the Chriſtian religion. And the ſame might, I doubt not, be ſaid of numbers of gentlemen now living, of eminent abilities, and diſtinguiſhed worth, who might be mentioned with great honour, though they have had no occaſion of appearing in the world as writers. But the controverſy is not to be decided by the authority of great names. Chriſtianity does not ſtand in need of that ſupport. It ſtandeth fixed on its own ſolid baſis, and only requireth to be conſidered with an attention ſuitable to its vaſt importance. It hath nothing to fear from a true freedom of thought, from deep reaſoning, and impartial inquiry. What it hath moſt to apprehend, is a thoughtleſs levity and inattention of mind, and an abſolute indifference to all religion, and to all inquiries about it. It is no eaſy matter to prevail with thoſe to think cloſely in ſuch a caſe as this, who are under the power of ſenſual affections and appetites, who are ſunk in indolence and a love of eaſe, or carried off with a perpetual hurry of diverſions and amuſements, or engaged in the warm purſuits of ambition or avarice. But ſurely, if the voice of reaſon is to be heard, and if there be any

thing

thing at all that deſerveth a ſerious attention, it is this. The inquiry whether Chriſtianity be true, and of a divine original, or not, is a matter of high importance, and upon which a great deal dependeth. The goſpel itſelf moſt certainly repreſenteth it ſo. If Chriſtianity be true and divine, thoſe to whom it is publiſhed, and who have an opportunity of inquiring into it, and yet neglect to do ſo, can never be able to juſtify their conduct to the great Ruler and Judge of the world. It cannot with any conſiſtency be ſuppoſed, that if God hath ſent his Son into the world, to bring a clear revelation of his will, and to guide men in the way of ſalvation, it is a matter of indifference whether thoſe to whom it is offered, and made known, pay any regard to this ſignification of the divine will, or not, or comply with the terms which are there preſcribed. And therefore for ſuch perſons to reject it at a venture, without giving themſelves the trouble of a ſerious inquiry, or to continue in a wilful negligence and careleſs ſuſpenſe of mind in a matter of ſuch vaſt conſequence, is a moſt unaccountable and inexcuſable conduct, altogether unworthy of reaſonable thinking beings.

Let Chriſtianity therefore be carefully examined. Let the evidence for the facts on which its divine authority is ſupported, be coolly and impartially conſidered: whether it is not as much as could be reaſonably deſired, ſuppoſing thoſe facts were true, and which would be accounted ſufficient in any other caſe. Let the original records of Chriſtianity be inquired into: whether they have not the characters of genuine ſimplicity, integrity, and a ſincere regard to truth; and whether they have not been tranſmitted to us with an evidence equal or ſuperior to what can be produced for any other writings whatſoever. Let the nature and tendency of the religion itſelf be conſidered: whether the idea there given us of the Deity be not

ſuch as tendeth to render him both amiable and moſt venerable, to fill our hearts with a ſuperlative love to God, as having given the moſt amazing proofs of his wonderful love and goodneſs towards mankind, and at the ſame time with a ſacred awe and reverence of him as the wiſe and righteous governor of the world, a lover of order, and an hater of vice and wickedneſs; whether its precepts be not unqueſtionably pure and holy, and ſuch as, if faithfully complied with, would raiſe our natures to an high degree of moral excellence; whether the uniform tendency of the whole ſcheme of religion there held forth to us, be not to promote the honour of God and the good of mankind, and the cauſe of piety, righteouſneſs, and virtue in the world; to engage us to worſhip God with a pure adoration and devotion, to deal juſtly, kindly, and equitably with all men, and to ſubdue the ſenſual irregular affections and luſts, and keep them within proper bounds. Superſtition and falſe devotion have frequently put men upon unnatural and exceſſive rigours and auſterities; but Chriſtianity, like the bleſſed author of it, keeps clear of all extremes. It abridgeth us of no pleaſures within the bounds of purity and innocence: nor doth it oblige us to extinguiſh our natural appetites and paſſions, but to govern and moderate them, and preſerve them in a regular ſubjection to reaſon, and the law of the mind: and certainly it is neceſſary, for our own quiet and happineſs, and for the good order of ſociety, that we ſhould do ſo. And finally, let it be conſidered, whether any motives could poſſibly be exhibited more powerful and engaging than thoſe which the goſpel ſetteth before us. It propoſeth the nobleſt models for our imitation: God himſelf, in his imitable moral excellencies; and his well-beloved Son, the moſt perfect image of his own goodneſs and purity. It diſplayeth all the charms and attractions of redeeming grace

and

and love, to allure us. It giveth the greateſt encouragement to ſinners to repent, and forſake their evil ways; and promiſeth the moſt gracious aſſiſtances to help our infirmities, and to ſtrengthen our weak but ſincere endeavours in the performance of our duty. It raiſeth us to the moſt glorious proſpects and ſublime hopes, than which nothing can poſſibly have an happier tendency to engage us to a patient continuance in well-doing, amidſt the many difficulties and temptations of this preſent ſtate. The rewards it propoſeth are ſuch as are fitted to animate holy and generous ſouls, and to produce, not a ſervile and mercenary frame of ſpirit, but a true greatneſs of mind, viz. an happineſs conſiſting in the perfection of our natures, in a conformity to God, and the eternal enjoyment of him, and in the pure pleaſures of ſociety and friendſhip with glorious angels, and the ſpirits of the juſt made perfect. And on the other hand, to make an impreſſion upon thoſe that are inſenſible to the charms and beauty of virtue, it maketh the moſt lively and affecting repreſentations of the terrors of the wrath to come, and the puniſhments that ſhall be executed in a future ſtate upon thoſe that obſtinately perſiſt in a courſe of preſumptuous ſin and diſobedience.

This is an imperfect ſketch of the nature and deſign of Chriſtianity, as laid down in the goſpel. In this view let it be conſidered, and not be unjuſtly charged, as it hath often been, with corruptions that are only owing to a deviation from its original purity; or with the practices of thoſe who, though they make a profeſſion of believing it, allow themſelves in courſes which it forbids and condemns. What an happy world would this be, if men could be more generally perſuaded to yield a willing ſubjection to its divine authority, and to comply with its true ſpirit and deſign, and to give themſelves up to be governed by its excellent precepts and important motives!

What

What then can thoſe propoſe, that take pains to turn men from ſuch a religion as this, and to weaken or ſubvert the evidences of its divine authority? Can they pretend to introduce a more pure and ſublime morality, or to enforce it with more powerful motives? Do they propoſe to render men more holy and virtuous, more pious and devout towards God, more juſt and kind and benevolent towards men, more temperate and careful in the due government of their appetites and paſſions, than the goſpel requireth and obligeth them to be? Do they intend to advance the intereſts of virtue, by depriving it of its moſt effectual encouragements and ſupports; or to exalt the joys of good men, by weakening their hopes of everlaſting happineſs; or to reſtrain and reclaim the wicked and vicious, by freeing them from the fears of future puniſhment?

There is a great complaint of a growing diſſoluteneſs of manners, and of a general corruption. His Lordſhip repreſenteth this in the moſt lively terms; but, inſtead of aſcribing it to the proper cauſes, he is for laying the whole load of it on the preſent eſtabliſhment. Far from directing to the proper cure, he hath done what he could to take away that which would be the moſt effectual remedy, the influence of Chriſtianity on the minds and conſciences of men. When the reſtraints of religion are once taken off, what can be expected but that they ſhould abandon themſelves to the conduct of their paſſions? Human laws and penalties will be found to be weak ties where there is no fear of God, nor regard to a future ſtate, or the powers of the world to come. In proportion as a neglect or contempt of religion groweth amongſt us, a diſſoluteneſs of morals will prevail; and when once this becometh general among a people, true probity and virtue, a right public ſpirit, and generous concern for the real intereſts

tereſts of our country, will be extinguiſhed. Surely then all that wiſh well to the good order of ſociety, and to the happineſs of mankind, ought to wiſh that true uncorrupted Chriſtianity ſhould generally obtain and prevail; and that men ſhould not only heartily believe, but ſeriouſly conſider it, and endeavour to get it wrought into the very frame and temper of their ſouls. For Chriſtianity is not a mere outward form and profeſſion, but a living principle, of a practical nature and tendency. And it is not enough to have a ſpeculative notion and belief of it, but we muſt conſider it with that attention which becometh us, and do what we can to enforce its excellent doctrines and motives upon our hearts.

REFLECTIONS

ON THE LATE

LORD BOLINGBROKE'S LETTERS.

PART I.

On the Study and Uſe of Hiſtory.

THE late Lord Bolingbroke has generally obtained the reputation of being one of the fineſt writers in our language. This hath procured him a kind of authority in the world, which makes way for an eaſy and favourable reception of any thing that is publiſhed under his name. A writer poſſeſſed of ſuch talents hath it in his power to be ſignally ſerviceable to religion, and the true intereſt of his country; and on the other hand, there is ſcarce any thing of more pernicious influence than ſuch talents miſapplied. When the public was firſt informed of Letters written by him on the Study and Uſe of Hiſtory, it was natural to expect ſomething very entertaining and improving from ſuch an author on ſuch a ſubject. And it will not be denied, that he has many good, and ſome very curious obſervations, expreſſed in a very genteel manner, and with great elegance and purity of ſtyle; but theſe are interſperſed with others of a very different kind, and of a dangerous tendency.

In theſe Letters his Lordſhip has done what he could to expoſe the authority of the Scriptures to contempt, and at the ſame time has made the moſt diſadvantageous repreſentation of the preſent ſtate of the government and conſtitution of his country. If we are to truſt the accounts he giveth us, Chriſtianity hath no real foundation of truth in fact to depend upon; it hath been upheld by ſuperſtition, ignorance, and impoſture; and hath been viſibly decaying ever ſince the revival of learning and knowledge. And our civil conſtitution, inſtead of being rendered

better

better at the late revolution, hath been ever ſince growing worſe; and our liberties are in more real danger than they were in before. The natural tendency of ſuch repreſentations is to inſpire a thorough contempt and diſregard of the religion into which we were baptized, and to produce endleſs jealouſies and diſcontents, if not open inſurrections, againſt the government under which we live. No man therefore, who hath a juſt zeal for either of theſe, can ſee without concern ſuch an inſolent attempt againſt both. And in this caſe, the quality, the ability, the reputation of the writer, as it maketh the attempt more dangerous, rendereth it more neceſſary to guard againſt it. If an inferior writer had ſaid all that his Lordſhip hath advanced, it would have deſerved very little notice. But there are too many that are ready almoſt implicitly to ſwallow down any thing that cometh to them recommended by a great name; eſpecially if it be advanced with a very peremptory and deciſive air. And if an author's account of himſelf muſt be taken, there perhaps ſcarce ever was a writer whoſe judgment ought to have greater weight, or who better deſerves that an almoſt implicit regard ſhould be had to his dictates, than the author of theſe Letters.

He enters upon his firſt Letter with declaring, that the rules he is going to recommend as neceſſary to be obſerved in the ſtudy of hiſtory, were——"very different from thoſe which "writers on the ſame ſubject have recommended, and which are "commonly practiſed."—But he aſſureth his reader (and I believe him) that——"this never gave him any diſtruſt of them."—And therefore he propoſeth to tell his ſentiments—"without "any regard to the opinion and practice even of the learned "world *."—He declareth it as his opinion, that—"A creditable "kind of ignorance is the whole benefit which the generality of "men, even of the moſt learned, reap from the ſtudy of hiſtory, "which yet appeareth to him of all other the moſt proper to "train us up to private and public virtue †."—Surely then the world muſt be mightily obliged to an author, who comes to give them inſtructions and directions in a matter of ſuch great importance, which the generality of men, even of the moſt learned, were unacquainted with before.

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 1, 2. † Ibid. p. 15.

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In his Letter on the *True Uſe of Retirement and Study*, he finely repreſenteth, what——" a deſirable thing it muſt be to every " thinking man, to have the opportunity indulged to ſo few, of " living ſome years at leaſt to ourſelves, in a ſtate of freedom, " under the laws of reaſon, inſtead of paſſing our whole time " under thoſe of authority and cuſtom."——And aſks—" Is it " not worth our while to contemplate ourſelves and others, and " all the things of this world, once before we leave them, through " the medium of pure and undefiled reaſon *?"——He obſerves that " they who can abſtract themſelves from the prejudices, " and habits, and pleaſures, and buſineſs of the world, which," he ſays," is what many are, though all are not, capable of doing, " may elevate their ſouls in retreat to a higher ſtation, and may " take from thence ſuch a view of the world as the ſecond Scipio " took, in his dream, from the ſeats of the bleſſed."——That this will enable them to——" diſtinguiſh every degree of probability, " from the loweſt to the higheſt, and mark the difference between " this and certainty, and to eſtabliſh peace of mind, where alone " it can reſt ſecurely, on reſignation †." In what follows he ſeems to apply this to his own caſe. He repreſents himſelf as in a ſtate of retirement from the world, abſtracted from its pleaſures, and diſengaged from the habits of buſineſs: though at the ſame time he declareth his reſolution, *in his retreat*, to contribute as much as he can to *defend and preſerve the Britiſh conſtitution of government*; for which he expected his reward from God alone, to whom he *paid this ſervice* ‡. He goes on to obſerve in the ſame Letter, that——" he who has not cultivated his reaſon " young, will be utterly unable to improve it old."—And that ——" not only a love of ſtudy, and a deſire of knowledge, muſt " have grown up with us, but ſuch an induſtrious application " likewiſe, as requires the whole vigour of the mind to be ex- " erted in the purſuit of truth, through long trains of diſcourſe, " and all thoſe dark receſſes, wherein man, not God, has hid it." ——And then he declares, that *this love*, and *this deſire*, he has *felt all his life*, and is *not quite a ſtranger to this induſtry and application* §.

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. ii. p. 197.
† Ibid. p. 199.
‡ Ibid. 201, 202.
§ Ibid. p. 205, 206.

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His *Reflections upon Exile* tend alſo to give one an high idea of the author. Speaking of the neceſſity of ſtanding watchful as centinels, to diſcover the ſecret wiles and open attacks of that capricious goddeſs, Fortune, before they can reach us, he adds, "I learned this important leſſon long ago, and never truſted to "Fortune, even while ſhe ſeemed to be at peace with me. The "riches, the honours, the reputation, and all the advantages "which her treacherous indulgence poured upon me, I placed "ſo, that ſhe might ſnatch them away without giving me any "diſturbance. I kept a great interval between me and them. "She took them, but ſhe could not tear them from me*." He frequently expreſſeth himſelf in thoſe Reflections, as one ſuperior to fortune and exile, and that had attained to a perfect philoſophic calmneſs and tranquillity, whoſe mind was not to be diſcompoſed by any outward evils; as one who was *far from the hurry of the world, and almoſt an unconcerned ſpectator of what paſſes in it*, and who, *having paid in a public life* what he *owed to the preſent age*, was reſolved to *pay in a private life what he owes to poſterity;* and who was determined to *write* as well as *live without paſſion*†. And who would not be inclined to pay a vaſt regard to the ſentiments of a great genius, that had always from his youth loved ſtudy, and deſired knowledge, and to this added induſtry and application: who had an opportunity for retirement from the world, and knew how to improve it; and who had made uſe of his ſolitude to contemplate himſelf and others, and all the things of this world, through the medium of pure and undefiled reaſon!

But there are ſeveral things that tend to take off from that dependence one might otherwiſe be apt to have upon an author poſſeſſed of ſo many advantages.

It can ſcarce be denied, that there is a great appearance of vanity in theſe Letters. A certain air of ſufficiency breathes through the whole. He every-where pronounceth in a dogmatical and deciſive way, and with a kind of dictatorial authority; and ſeemeth to regard himſelf as placed in a diſtinguiſhed ſphere, from whence he looketh down with ſuperiority and contempt upon thoſe that have hitherto paſſed for learned and knowing.

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. ii. p. 234. † Ibid. p. 282.

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To this may be added, what can ſcarce eſcape the notice of the commoneſt reader, a viſible affectation of advancing ſomething new, and which had not been thought of, or inſiſted upon, before. How often doth the polite author of theſe Letters, when giving his directions, and making his obſervations upon the ſtudy and uſe of hiſtory, put his noble correſpondent in mind, that they were quite different from any thing that had been obſerved by thoſe learned men who had treated of this ſubject before him! In this I think him miſtaken. But at preſent I only mention it as a proof of the deſire he was poſſeſſed with of appearing to think in a way different from, and ſuperior to, the reſt of mankind, even of the learned world. Such a deſire and affectation of novelty, and of thinking out of the common way, may lead perſons of great parts aſtray in their inquiries after truth, and hath often done ſo.

But there are other paſſions and affections that have a ſtill leſs friendly influence, and which are apt to give a wrong bias to the mind. Such is that keenneſs and bitterneſs of ſpirit which diſpoſeth a man to find fault, and to put the moſt unfavourable conſtructions upon perſons and things. I will not charge the late Lord Bolingbroke with having been really under the influence of ſuch a temper; but there are ſeveral things in his Letters which have that appearance. In his *Reflections upon Exile*, he layeth it down as a rule, *to live and write without paſſion:* he talks as if he had got above all outward evils, and had attained to a perfect tranquillity. And yet in theſe very Reflections, there are ſeveral paſſages that diſcover a very ſtrong reſentment, and great bitterneſs of ſpirit. He there intimates, that——"his "country had reaped the benefit of his ſervices, and he ſuffered "for them——That the perſons in oppoſition to whom he "ſerved, and even ſaved the public, conſpired and accompliſhed "his private ruin——That theſe were his accuſers, and the gid-"dy ungrateful crowd his judges——That art, joined to malice, "endeavoured to make his beſt actions paſs for crimes, and to "ſtain his character——That for this purpoſe the ſacred voice of "the ſenate was made to pronounce a lie; and thoſe records, "which ought to be the eternal monuments of truth, became "the vouchers of impoſture and calumny*." This is very

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. ii. p. 270, 271.

ſtrongly

ſtrongly expreſſed. I ſhall not at preſent inquire into the truth and juſtneſs of thoſe Reflections. I ſhall only obſerve, that this is not the language of a man who *lives and writes without paſſion*, or who is ſo *indifferent to common cenſure or approbation*, as he profeſſeth himſelf to be*. Nor is it eaſy to reconcile this with that philoſophic calmneſs, that moderation, and tranquillity of mind, which he ſometimes makes ſo great a ſhew of. There are ſeveral parts of his Letters, as I may have occaſion more diſtinctly to obſerve afterwards, in which he expreſſeth himſelf with all the rage and virulence of a paſſionate party-writer.

It were not ſo much to be wondered at, if he diſcovered a reſentment againſt thoſe whom he might apprehend to be the authors of his ſufferings; but there are ſeveral things that look as if he were out of humour with mankind. Of the critics, chronologers, antiquaries, and of the learned in general, even thoſe of them that have been in the higheſt reputation, he frequently expreſſeth the utmoſt contempt. He inveighs ſeverely againſt the divines, ancient and modern; and repreſents even thoſe of them who, he ſays, may be called ſo without a ſneer, as not ſagacious or not honeſt enough, to make an impartial examination. The gentlemen of the law fall under his heavy cenſure; and he will ſcarcely allow, that ſince Lord Bacon, and the Earl of Clarendon, there have been any of them that have attained to any eminent degree of learning and knowledge; and he taketh upon him to foretel, that, except there ſhould come ſome better age, there will not be any ſuch among them for the future. The members of parliament he repreſents as regarding the buſineſs of parliament only as a trade; that few know, and ſcarce any reſpect, the Britiſh conſtitution; and that the very idea of wit, and all that can be called taſte, has been loſt among the great. Such general cenſures might be expected in a writer that profeſſedly ſets himſelf to diſplay his talents in ſatire and ridicule; but do not look ſo well in one that appeareth in a ſuperior character, and who taketh upon him to inſtruct and guide, to form men's taſte, and direct their conduct, and enable them to paſs right judgments on perſons and things. Such a temper is not a very good diſpoſition for an impartial inquiry; it is apt to repreſent perſons and things in a diſadvantageous light, and to give a

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 6.

malignant

malignant tincture to the Reflections: nor is it very ſurprizing to ſee a writer of this turn paſs harſh and ſevere cenſures, not only on the adminiſtration, but on the religion, of his country.

All the uſe I would make of theſe obſervations is, to keep us from ſuffering ourſelves to be too ſtrongly biaſſed in favour of a writer ſo diſtinguiſhed by his abilities, and who putteth on ſuch ſpecious appearances.

I ſhall now proceed to a more diſtinct examination of Lord Bolingbroke's Letters.

In them we may find, as hath been already hinted, many good and fine obſervations relating to the ſtudy and uſe of hiſtory, delivered with great clearneſs of expreſſion, and propriety of ſentiment. His directions are full of good ſenſe, and many of them very aptly illuſtrated by proper and well-choſen inſtances. In general, it muſt be allowed, that his obſervations concerning the uſefulneſs of hiſtory, the advantages he aſcribes to it, and the ends to be propoſed in it, are, for the moſt part, juſt; but there is not much in them that can be regarded as perfectly new. I do not ſay this by way of diſparagement, to detract from the merit of his Reflections: perhaps on ſuch a ſubject it is ſcarce poſſible to make any obſervation which hath not been made by ſome one or other before. It is a ſufficient commendation of an author, if he hath placed his reflections and obſervations in an agreeable and advantageous light, if he hath diſpoſed them in a beautiful order, and illuſtrated his rules by proper exemplifications. But his Lordſhip ſeems not to be contented with the praiſe of having done this. He appears to be extremely deſirous to have it thought, that his obſervations are not only juſt, but new, and ſuch as other writers have not made before him. He declareth, in a paſſage cited before from his firſt Letter, that the rules he gives—"are very different from thoſe which "writers on the ſame ſubject have recommended, and which "are commonly practiſed *:——And that——"he will have no "regard to the methods preſcribed by others, or to the opinion "and practice even of the learned world †."——And he ſpeaks to the ſame purpoſe in his third Letter ‡. And after having declared, that the ſtudy of hiſtory will prepare us for action and

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 1. † Ibid. p. 2. ‡ Ibid. p. 69.

obſervation, and that——" hiſtory is converſant about the " paſt; and by knowing the things that have been, we become " better able to judge of the things that are;"——he adds,—— " This uſe, my Lord, which I make the proper and principal " uſe of the ſtudy of hiſtory, is not inſiſted on by thoſe who " have written concerning the method to be followed in this " ſtudy; and ſince we propoſe different ends, we muſt of courſe " take different ways *." He immediately ſubjoins, " Few of " their treatiſes have fallen into my hands." And is it not a little ſtrange that he ſhould ſo poſitively pronounce, that others have not, in their treatiſes concerning the method to be followed in the ſtudy of hiſtory, inſiſted on that which he makes the proper and principal uſe of it, when at the ſame time he acknowledgeth that few of their treatiſes had fallen into his hands? One would think, by his way of repreſenting it, that none before this noble writer had mentioned it as the proper uſe and end of hiſtory, to promote our improvement in virtue, to make us better men and better citizens, to teach us by example, and to prepare us for action and obſervation, that by knowing the things that have been, we may become better able to judge of the things that are. And yet I am apt to think, that few have ſet themſelves to ſhew the uſe that is to be made of hiſtory, the ends to be propoſed in it, and the advantages ariſing from it, but have in effect ſaid the ſame thing. And it were no hard matter, if it were neceſſary, to fill up ſeveral pages with quotations to this purpoſe, from authors ancient and modern.

Hiſtory is, no doubt, capable of being improved to excellent purpoſes; and yet the author of theſe Letters ſeems ſometimes to have carried it too far, as if hiſtory (not ſacred hiſtory—for this, with the examples it affordeth, he diſcards as of little or no uſe) were the beſt, the only ſchool of virtue, the moſt univerſal and neceſſary means of inſtruction, alone ſufficient to make us good men and good citizens, and to furniſh us with all the knowledge that is proper for our direction in practice. He obſerves,——that " hiſtory is philoſophy, teaching us by ex- " ample, how to conduct ourſelves in all the ſtations of private " and public life."——And that——" it is of all other the

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 67, 68.

" moſt

"moſt proper to train us up to public and private virtue *."—He declares, that——" every one that is able to read, and to " reflect upon what he reads, is able to make that uſe of hiſtory " which he recommends: and every one who makes it, will " find in his degree the benefit that ariſes from an early acquain- " tance with mankind, contracted in this method †."——He adds, that——" we are only paſſengers or ſojourners in this " world; but we are abſolute ſtrangers at the firſt ſteps we take " in it. Our guides are often ignorant, often unfaithful. But " by this map of the country which hiſtory ſpreads before us, " we may learn, if we pleaſe, to guide ourſelves."——So that hiſtory is the guide he propoſeth to all men to conduct them in their journey through this world, and by which every man is capable of guiding himſelf in all the ſituations and circumſtances of public and private life.

Hiſtory is, no doubt, very uſeful in its proper place; but there are other means of inſtruction to be joined with it, in order to its anſwering the end. It is not to ſerve inſtead of every thing, and to ſuperſede all other methods of inſtruction. We ſtand in need of being well ſeaſoned and principled with a juſt ſenſe of the moral differences of things, and with the excellent rules of religion, and the important conſiderations it ſetteth before us, that we may form juſt ſentiments of things, and may make a right uſe of hiſtory for our improvement in virtue, and may know properly how to apply the examples it furniſheth. Accordingly our author himſelf inſiſteth upon it, that we muſt apply ourſelves to hiſtory——" in a philoſophical ſpirit and " manner ‡."——He obſerveth, that——" particular examples " in hiſtory may be of uſe ſometimes in particular caſes, but " that the application of them is dangerous."—He would have a man therefore ſtudy hiſtory as he would ſtudy philoſophy. And in the account he gives in his third Letter of what is neceſſary in order to make a right uſe of hiſtory, he carrieth it ſo far, and really maketh the work ſo difficult, as to be above what can be expected from the generality of mankind; and concludeth with ſaying, that——" by ſuch methods as theſe a man of

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 15. 57. † Ibid. p. 171, 172.
‡ Ibid. vol. i. p. 58.

" parts may improve the ſtudy of hiſtory to its proper and prin-
" cipal uſe *."——Where he ſeemeth to repreſent the making a right uſe of hiſtory as a very difficult thing, which none but men of parts and philoſophic ſpirits are capable of, and which requireth the exacteſt judgment, and niceſt diſcernment, as well as a very cloſe application. In this paſſage the uſe and advantage of hiſtory ſeems to be confined within too narrow bounds, as in ſome of the former it had been extended too far.

As to the method to be followed in the ſtudy of hiſtory, though the author of theſe Letters ſpeaks with great diſregard, and even contempt, of thoſe that have written on this ſubject before him, yet the only one he particularly mentions is Bodin. He obſerveth, that " in his method we are to take firſt a general view of " univerſal hiſtory and chronology in ſhort abſtracts, and then " to ſtudy all particular hiſtories and ſyſtems."——Upon which his Lordſhip remarketh, that—" This would take up our whole " lives, and leave us no time for action, or would make us unfit " for it †."——And afterwards he obſerves, that——" the man " who reads without diſcernment and choice, and, like Bodin's " pupil, reſolves to read all, will not have time, nor capacity " neither, to do any thing elſe ‡."—But I cannot think it was Bodin's intention to lay it as an injunction upon his pupil to read without choice and diſcernment all the particular hiſtories that have ever been publiſhed. But the meaning is, that the beſt and moſt regular way of reading and ſtudying hiſtory is, firſt to take a brief general view and ſurvey of univerſal hiſtory and chronology, and then to proceed to the hiſtories of particular countries, nations, and ages. And this appeareth to be a very reaſonable and natural method. And if Bodin propoſes the taking a large ſcope and compaſs in reading hiſtory, his Lordſhip, though he ſeems here to blame him for it, ſometimes expreſſeth himſelf in a manner that looks no leſs extenſive: for he recommendeth the reading hiſtory of all kinds, of civilized and uncivilized, of ancient and modern nations, as neceſſary to give us a right knowledge of the human ſpecies, and of ourſelves. He obſerves in his fifth Letter, that " man is the ſubject of

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 65, 66. † Ibid. p. 69.
‡ Ibid. p. 142, 143.

" every

" every hiſtory, and to know him well, we muſt ſee him and " conſider him, as hiſtory alone can preſent him to us, in every " age, in every country, in every ſtate, in life and in death. " Hiſtory therefore of all kinds, of civilized and uncivilized, of " ancient and modern nations, in ſhort, all hiſtory that deſcends " to a ſufficient detail of human actions and characters, is uſeful " to bring us acquainted with our ſpecies, nay with ourſelves *." And particularly with reſpect to ancient hiſtory, he mentioneth it in his ſecond Letter as a great advantage, that " in ancient hiſtory " the beginning, the progreſſion, and the end, appear, not of par- " ticular reigns, much leſs of particular enterprizes, or ſyſtems " of policy alone, but of governments, of nations, of empires, " and of all the various ſyſtems that have ſucceeded one another " in the courſe of their duration †." And yet he afterwards ſeems to confine our attention to modern hiſtory. He will allow us indeed to *read* the hiſtories of former ages and nations, becauſe it would be ſhameful to be entirely ignorant of them; but he would not have us *ſtudy* any hiſtories, but thoſe of the two laſt centuries. That theſe deſerve a particular attention, will eaſily be acknowledged, for ſeveral reaſons, and, among others, for that which he aſſigns; the great change that has been brought about in the civil and eccleſiaſtical polity of theſe parts of the world ſince the latter end of the fifteenth century; of which he gives an elegant repreſentation in his ſixth Letter. But certainly there are many things in the hiſtories of the preceding ages, both in other countries, and in our own, that well deſerve to be not only read, but to be thoroughly conſidered by us; and which are capable of furniſhing very uſeful reflections, and anſwering thoſe excellent ends, for which, in the former part of theſe Letters, he had recommended the ſtudy of hiſtory. This might eaſily be ſhewn, if it admitted of any doubt, both with regard to civil hiſtory and eccleſiaſtical.

But, not to inſiſt longer upon this, and ſome other obſervations that might be made on particular paſſages in theſe Letters, I ſhall proceed to what is the principal intention of theſe Remarks, *viz.* to conſider thoſe things in them, of which a bad uſe may be made, or which appear to be of a pernicious tendency.

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 170. † Ibid. p. 42.

And here I ſhall firſt conſider the reflections he has caſt upon literature; and then ſhall proceed to thoſe paſſages in his Letters, which are deſigned to expoſe the holy Scriptures, and the Chriſtian religion.

It may ſeem a little ſurpriſing, that ſo polite a writer, and one who, as he lets us know, always from his youth loved ſtudy and application, ſhould yet, in ſeveral parts of theſe Letters, expreſs himſelf in a manner that ſeems calculated to throw a contempt upon learning, and to put men off from applying themſelves to the purſuit of it. Every friend of learning ſhould, I think, acknowledge, that there is a regard due to thoſe that in their ſeveral ways have contributed to promote it. But this ingenious writer takes every occaſion to place them in a ridiculous or contemptible light. In his firſt Letter, he gives a very diſadvantageous idea of thoſe who, as he expreſſeth it, "make fair "copies of foul manuſcripts, give the ſignification of hard words, "and take a great deal of other grammatical pains." He owns indeed, that *they enable others to ſtudy with greater eaſe, and to purpoſes more uſeful;* but he aſſures us, that *they neither grow wiſer nor better by ſtudy themſelves.* He adds, that "the obli-"gation to theſe men would be great indeed, if they were in "general able to do any thing better, and ſubmitted to this "drudgery for the uſe of the public, as ſome of them, it muſt "be owned with gratitude, have done; but not later, I think, "than about the time of the reſurrection of letters." And he at length condeſcendeth to declare, that "they deſerve encou-"ragement, whilſt they continue to compile, and neither affect "wit, nor preſume to reaſon*." This is a very hard cenſure pronounced upon all thoſe, without diſtinction, that ſince the time of the reſurrection of letters, *i. e.* for theſe two centuries paſt, have compiled dictionaries or gloſſaries, or have reviſed and publiſhed ancient manuſcripts, or correct editions of books; or who have been employed in explaining hard words, and in clearing obſcure paſſages in ancient authors, or making critical obſervations upon them, and in other things of that kind. Not content to repreſent them as abſolutely void of genius, and having

* Bolingbroke's Works, p. 5, 6.

no

no pretenſions to wit or reaſon, and as neither wiſer nor better for their ſtudies themſelves, he will not allow, that any of them had the public good in view, in the drudgery they ſubmitted to. But I ſcarce know a greater ſign of a malignity of temper, than a diſpoſition to give the worſt turn to every thing, and to judge harſhly of the inward intentions of men's hearts, when there is nothing in their actions to ſupport ſuch a judgment. It were eaſy to name perſons, that, within theſe two laſt centuries, have employed themſelves in the way he mentions, who were unqueſtionably men of great judgment and genius, as well as induſtry: or, at leaſt, a ſmall ſhare of good-nature and candour would incline one to allow them the praiſe of having had the public utility in view, in works, which, by his own acknowledgment, have greatly ſerved the intereſts of learning, and contributed to the ſpreading of it.

But how meanly ſoever he thinks of the grammarians, critics, compilers of dictionaries, and reviſers and publiſhers of manuſcripts, he maketh a ſtill more diſadvantageous repreſentation of antiquaries and chronologers. Speaking of perſons that have hitherto been regarded as of great figure and eminence in the republic of letters, he avoweth "a thorough contempt for the "whole buſineſs of their learned lives; for all the reſearches "into antiquity, for all the ſyſtems of chronology and hiſtory, "that we owe to the immenſe labours of a Scaliger, a Bochart, "a Petavius, an Uſher, and even a Marſham*." It ſeems very odd, for one that ſpeaks ſo highly of the advantage of hiſtory, to expreſs ſuch a contempt for the labours of chronologers, which certainly are of great uſe for digeſting hiſtory into its proper periods, in order to a regular and orderly conception and underſtanding of it. In a paſſage cited above, he mentioneth it among the advantages of hiſtory, eſpecially ancient hiſtory, that we there ſee events as they followed one another; "that there the begin-"ning, the progreſſion, and the end, appear, not of particular "reigns, much leſs of particular enterprizes, or ſyſtems of policy "alone, but of governments, of nations, of empires, and of all "the various ſyſtems that have ſucceeded one another in the "courſe of their duration." This ſeems to ſhew the advantage,

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 6.

and even neceſſity, of chronology; and, with regard to this, the labours of a Scaliger, a Petavius, and Uſher, are highly uſeful and commendable. To endeavour to digeſt the hiſtory of mankind, and of the principal events that have happened in the world, in a regular ſeries, to mark the riſe and fall of cities and empires, to compare and connect the hiſtories of different countries and nations, ſacred hiſtory and profane; and, in order to this, to lay together the ſcattered hints and fragments of different ages, is, notwithſtanding his degrading repreſentation of it, a noble employment, an employment that even a Sir Iſaac Newton judged not to be unworthy of his great genius. One would be apt to think, that every impartial perſon, who hath a juſt value for learning, muſt have a great honour for thoſe that have taken pains to ſet theſe things in a proper light: and where abſolute certainty cannot be attained to, an happy conjecture may be both pleaſing and uſeful.

In his third letter, he findeth great fault with thoſe that make laborious inquiries into the firſt originals of nations. And in his fifth letter, he warneth the noble Lord to whom he writes, to *throw none of his time away*, as he ſaith he himſelf had done, in *groping in the dark in his ſearches into antiquity**. He ſpeaks with contempt of what he calls *dry regiſters of uſeleſs anecdotes;* and declares that "ten millions of ſuch anecdotes, "though they were true; and complete authentic volumes of "Egyptian or Chaldean, of Greek or Latin, of Gallic or Britiſh, "of French or Saxon records; would be of no value in his ſenſe, "becauſe of no uſe towards our improvement in wiſdom and "virtue; if they contained nothing more than dynaſties and "genealogies, and a bare mention of remarkable events in the "order of time, like journals, chronological tables, or dry and "meagre annals†."—But whatever opinion I may have of his Lordſhip's taſte, I cannot help thinking, that in this he is too rigid. It ſeems to be a very natural and unblameable curioſity, to ſearch as far as we can into the receſſes of antiquity, and the originals of nations; and there is a pleaſure even in thoſe glimmerings of light that break through the obſcurity, provided we do not repreſent thoſe things as certainties, which are only con-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 149. † Ibid. p. 150.

jectural.

jectural. And I believe there are few but would be apt to wiſh, that there were——" authentic volumes of Egyptian or Chal-" dean, Greek or Latin, Gallic or Britiſh records"——even though they were only like what he calls——" dry and meagre " annals,"——or, as he elſewhere ſpeaks,——" the gazettes of " antiquity;——and contained dynaſties and genealogies, with a mention of remarkable events that happened to thoſe nations in the order of time, like journals, or chronological tables. And if any learned man could diſcover ſuch ancient authentic records or monuments, few, I ſhould think, would blame him, or think him idly employed in publiſhing them to the world.

It looks a little odd, that there is no kind of men for whom, throughout theſe letters, he ſheweth a leſs regard than for thoſe that are generally accounted men of learning. Speaking of thoſe who "affect the reputation of great ſcholars, at the expence " of groping all their lives in the dark mazes of antiquity," he ſays, that " all theſe miſtake the true deſign of ſtudy, and the " true uſe of hiſtory." Great as the advantages are that he aſcribeth to hiſtory, and which he thinks every man is capable of that is able to read, and to reflect upon what he reads, yet—— " a creditable kind of ignorance is, in his opinion, the whole " benefit which the generality even of the moſt learned reap " from it."——And he intimates, that the only effect of their reading and ſtudying hiſtory is, to become pedants, *i. e.* as he explaineth it, " worſe than ignorant, always incapable, ſome-" times meddling and preſuming*."——And elſewhere he repreſenteth the credulous learned as only employed—" in wrang-" ling about ancient traditions, and ringing different changes on " the ſame ſet of bells†."

To all which may be added, what he ſaith, in his letter on the true uſe of retirement and ſtudy, concerning——" the ſcholar " and philoſopher, who, far from owning that he throws away " his time, reproves others for doing it; that ſolemn mortal who " abſtains from the pleaſures, and declines the buſineſs of the " world, that he may dedicate his whole time to the ſearch of " truth, and the improvement of knowledge."——He ſuppoſes him to have read " till he is become a great critic in Latin

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 14, 15. 21. † Ibid. p. 169.

" and

" and Greek, in the oriental tongues, in hiſtory and chronology;
" and not only ſo, but to have ſpent years in ſtudying philoſo-
" phers, commentators, and rabbies, and whole legions of modern
" doctors, and to be extremely well verſed in all that has been
" written concerning the nature of God, and of the ſoul of man,
" about matter and form, body and ſpirit, &c.*——And yet he pronounceth, that notwithſtanding all his learning, he is in a ſtate of ignorance, for want of having——" examined the *firſt* " principles, and the fundamental facts on which theſe queſtions " depend, with an abſolute indifference of judgment, and ſcru-" pulous exactneſs †." This he ſuppoſeth to be the caſe of " many a great ſcholar, many a profound philoſopher, many " a dogmatical caſuiſt;" yea, and as appeareth from other paſſages in his letters, of every learned man, of every philoſopher and divine whatſoever, that believeth Chriſtianity. On the other hand, he declareth concerning——" the man who hath " paſſed his life in the pleaſures or buſineſs of the world,"—— that whenever he ſets about the work of examining principles, and judging for himſelf——" concerning thoſe things that are " of greateſt importance to us here, and may be ſo hereafter, he " will ſoon have the advantage over the learned philoſopher. " For he will ſoon have ſecured what is neceſſary to his happineſs, " and may ſit down in the peaceful enjoyment of that knowledge; " or proceed with greater advantage and ſatisfaction to the ac-" quiſition of new knowledge; whilſt the other continues his " ſearch after things that are in their nature, to ſay the beſt of " them, hypothetical, precarious, and ſuperfluous ‡."

The natural tendency of theſe, and other reflections of a like kind, which occur in theſe letters, ſeems to be to pour contempt upon what have been hitherto eſteemed valuable branches of literature. Reſearches into antiquity, chronological ſtudies, criticiſm and philoſophy, diſquiſitions concerning the nature of God, the human ſoul, and other philoſophical and theological ſubjects, all theſe are repreſented as of little or no uſe; and only a more ſpecious kind of idleneſs. And if this be the caſe, I think it is wrong to complain of the Goths, Vandals, Saracens,

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. ii. p. 211, 212. † Ibid. p. 213, 214.
‡ Ibid. p. 216, 217.

and

and other barbarous nations, that burnt whole libraries, and deſtroyed the monuments of learning. They rid the world of a great deal of uſeleſs lumber, which tempted men to miſ-ſpend their time and pains; and it would have been an advantage to mankind, if more of them had been deſtroyed. Inſtead of being thankful to thoſe learned perſons that have taken ſuch pains to recover and publiſh ancient monuments, we are only to regard them as induſtrious triflers, to whoſe labours the world is very little obliged. Nor can I ſee, upon ſuch a view of things, what uſe or need there is of ſeminaries of learning. But, in good earneſt, can this be regarded as a proper way to mend our taſte, and help forward our improvement? Such a way of thinking, if it generally obtained, would, it is to be feared, inſtead of producing an extraordinary refinement of taſte, tend rather to ſink us into ignorance and barbariſm, and bring us back to the darkneſs of the moſt illiterate ages.

Taken in this view, I cannot think that theſe letters have a favourable aſpect on the intereſts of literature. Methinks there appeareth to be no great neceſſity at preſent of warning perſons not to ſpend their lives in laborious purſuits of learning. The prevailing turn of the age doth not ſeem to lie this way. Many of our gentlemen will no doubt be very well pleaſed to be aſſured, that though they paſs their lives in the buſineſs or pleaſures of the world, yet if they at length ſet themſelves to examine firſt principles, and conſult the oracle of their own reaſon, without any regard to the opinion of others, or troubling themſelves to read the writings of philoſophers or divines, they are in a more likely way of diſcovering truth, and making a progreſs in uſeful knowledge, than any of thoſe "ſolemn mortals, who abſtain "from the pleaſures, and decline the buſineſs of the world, that "they may dedicate their whole time to the ſearch of truth, and "the improvement of knowledge." This is certainly a very flattering ſcheme, and ſeems to open a very ſhort and eaſy way for attaining to wiſdom. When they find a man of his Lordſhip's fine and elegant taſte, and great talents, and who by his own account hath ſpent ſo much time and pains in the learned inquiries, pronouncing them abſolutely vain and uſeleſs, they will be very apt to take his word for it, and not give themſelves the trouble of laborious ſtudy; the reſult of which might be only filling their

heads

heads with what he calleth *learned lumber*, and expoſing them to the ridiculous character of *pedants*, *i. e.* as he deſcribeth them, "men worſe than ignorant, always incapable, ſometimes med-"dling and preſuming." Inſtead of ſuch learned drudgery, the more eaſy and delightful taſk of ſtudying modern hiſtory may be ſufficient to furniſh them with all the knowledge they want, and anſwer every end of uſeful improvement.

But ſurely ſuch a manner of repreſenting things is not altogether juſt, nor is this the moſt effectual way of promoting real improvement in wiſdom and virtue. Great is the extent, and wide the field, of ſcience. Many noble ſubjects there are of inquiry, which well deſerve our attention. The deſire of knowledge is the ſtrongeſt in the nobleſt minds; but comparatively ſmall is the progreſs that a man is capable of making by his own unaſſiſted ability, within the ſhort compaſs of this preſent life: and therefore, be his abilities ever ſo great, he will need the aſſiſtance of others, and ought to be very thankful for it. Many excellent perſons in different ages have employed their pains this way; and a mighty advantage that man hath, who has the opportunity, and knows how to improve it, of profiting by their labours. He may, by reading, vaſtly increaſe his ſtock of knowledge, may meet with many valuable hints, which elſe would not have occurred to him, and may find important ſubjects ſet in a clearer light than otherwiſe he would have ſeen them. The Author of our beings, who hath implanted in us the deſire of knowledge, and fitted us for communicating our ſentiments, undoubtedly deſigned, that, in acquiring knowledge as well as in other things, we ſhould be helpful to one another, and not depend merely upon ourſelves. And this is the great advantage of language, and of letters. We muſt indeed make uſe of our own reaſon, but we ought alſo to take in all the helps and advantages we can get: and he that is careful to improve thoſe helps which are afforded him, and who, without ſubmitting implicitly to the judgments and opinions of others, endeavours to make the beſt uſe he can of their labours and ſtudies, as well as of his own thoughts, is in a far more likely way of improving his knowledge, and will better approve himſelf to God, and to all wiſe men, than he that, from a vain confidence in his own judgment, deſpiſeth and rejecteth thoſe helps; and, under

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pretence of conſulting the oracle of reaſon in his own breaſt, (for, as his Lordſhip expreſſeth it, "every man's reaſon is every "man's oracle,") will not give himſelf the trouble to read and to examine what others have ſaid and thought before him. Such an high conceit of a man's own capacity and judgment, ſuch an arrogant ſelf-ſufficiency, and a contempt of the labours and judgments of others, is not a very proper diſpoſition for finding out truth. A man of this character was Epicurus, who boaſted that his knowledge was all of his own acquiring, and ſcorned to ſeem to be beholden to any other for his notions.

Having conſidered thoſe parts of the late Lord Bolingbroke's Letters that ſeem not very favourable to the intereſts of literature, I ſhall now proceed to what is the principal deſign of theſe Remarks, to examine the reflections he has caſt upon the ſacred monuments of our religion. He firſt attacks the hiſtory of the Bible, eſpecially as contained in the books of the Old Teſtament; and then proceeds to a more direct attempt upon Chriſtianity. And this appears not to be a thing he treats of merely by-the-bye, but to be a point he has formally in view, and for which he profeſſes a kind of zeal. I ſhall therefore conſider diſtinctly what he hath offered.

In his third Letter on the ſtudy of hiſtory, he ſetteth himſelf to conſider the ſtate of ancient hiſtory, both ſacred and profane: and begins with declaring his reſolution—"to ſpeak plainly and "particularly in favour of common ſenſe, againſt an abſurdity "which is almoſt ſanctified*." After having made ſome obſervations on the ſtate of ancient prophane hiſtory, and ſhewn, that it is full of fables, and altogether uncertain, he next comes to apply theſe obſervations to ancient ſacred hiſtory†. What he ſeems at firſt to propoſe, is, to ſhew, that it is "inſufficient to "give us light into the original of ancient nations, and the hiſ-"tory of thoſe ages we commonly call the firſt ages." But it is evident, that, under pretence of ſhewing this, his intention is, to repreſent the whole hiſtory of the Bible as abſolutely uncertain, and not at all to be depended upon for a juſt account of facts. He not only denieth, that the writers of the hiſtorical parts of the Old Teſtament were divinely inſpired, but he will

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 70. † Ibid. p. 83, & ſeq.

not

not allow them the credit that is due to any common honeſt hiſtorians. He repreſents thoſe hiſtories as "delivered to us on "the faith of a ſuperſtitious people, among whom the cuſtom and "art of lying prevailed remarkably*. And obſerves, that "the "Jewiſh hiſtory never obtained any credit in the world, till "Chriſtianity was eſtabliſhed†." He ſometimes expreſſeth himſelf, as if he were willing to allow the divine inſpiration of the doctrinal and prophetical parts of the Bible, and were only for rejecting the hiſtorical. And this he pretends to be the beſt way to defend the authority of the Scriptures‡. But it is evident that this is only a ſneer. For he was, no doubt, ſenſible, that the ſacred hiſtory is ſo interwoven with the prophecies and laws, that if the former is to be regarded as lying fiction, and not at all to be depended upon, the divine authority of the other cannot be ſupported. And what he afterwards repeatedly affirmeth of Chriſtianity, that the credit of its divine inſtitution dependeth upon facts, holdeth equally concerning the Old Teſtament œconomy.

After having done what he can, in his third Letter, to ſhew the uncertainty of ancient ſacred as well as profane hiſtory, he begins his fourth with obſerving, that as "we are apt naturally "to apply to ourſelves what has happened to other men; and "as examples take their force from hence; ſo what we do not "believe to have happened, we ſhall not thus apply; and, for "want of the ſame application, the examples will not have the "ſame effect:" And then he adds, "ancient hiſtory, ſuch "ancient hiſtory as I have deſcribed," [in which ancient ſacred hiſtory is manifeſtly comprehended] "is quite unfit in this re-"ſpect to anſwer the ends that every reaſonable man ſhould "promiſe to himſelf in his ſtudy; becauſe ſuch ancient hiſtory "will never gain ſufficient credit with any reaſonable man§." And afterwards ſpeaking of ancient fabulous narrations, he declares, that "ſuch narrations cannot make the ſlighteſt momen-"tary impreſſions on a mind fraught with knowledge and void "of ſuperſtition. Impoſed by authority, and aſſiſted by artifice, "the deluſion hardly prevails over common ſenſe; blind igno-"rance almoſt ſees, and raſh ſuperſtition heſitates: nothing leſs

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 87.
† Ibid. p. 91.
‡ Ibid. p. 93. 98, 99.
§ Ibid. p. 118.

"than

" than enthuſiaſm and phrenſy can give credit to ſuch hiſtories, " or apply ſuch examples." He thinks, that what he has ſaid will " not be much controverted by any man that has examined " our ancient traditions without prepoſſeſſion:" And that all the difference between them, and Amadis of Gaul, is this, that " in Amadis of Gaul we have a thread of abſurdities that lay no " claim to belief; but ancient traditions are an heap of fables, " under which ſome particular truths inſcrutable, and therefore " uſeleſs to mankind, may lie concealed, which have a juſt pre- " tence to nothing more," [*i. e.* to no more credit than Amadis of Gaul] " and yet impoſe themſelves upon us, and become, " under the venerable name of ancient hiſtory, the foundation " of modern fables*." He doth not directly apply this to the Scriptures: but no one can doubt that this was his intention. It is too evident, that theſe are deſigned to be included in what he calleth " our ancient traditions;" (a word which he had applied ſeveral times before to the ſacred records;) and which he repreſenteth as " impoſed by authority, and aſſiſted by artifice." And I think it ſcarce poſſible to expreſs a greater contempt of any writing, than he here doth of the hiſtory of the Bible, and the examples it affords.

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol, i. p. 120, 121.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS

ON THE LATE

LORD BOLINGBROKE's LETTERS.

PART II.

SECTION I.

The Hiſtory and Scriptures of the Old Teſtament vindicated againſt his Lordſhip's Exceptions.

HAVING given this general view of the author's deſign, I ſhall now proceed to a more diſtinct and particular examination of the principal things he hath offered to invalidate the authority of the Old Teſtament hiſtory. What he ſaith of Chriſtianity ſhall be conſidered afterwards.

I need not take much notice of what he hath urged to ſhew, that the writers of the Sacred Books did not intend an univerſal hiſtory, or ſyſtem of chronology*. I know nobody that ſuppoſes they did; ſo that he might have ſpared that part of his pains. But notwithſtanding the Bible was not deſigned for an univerſal hiſtory, or to exhibit a complete ſyſtem of chronology, though it may ſafely be affirmed, that no one book in the world gives ſo great helps this way, it is ſufficient if it gives us a true hiſtory as far as it goes, and which may be ſafely depended upon. This is what our author will not allow. It is manifeſt, that he placeth it in the ſame rank with the moſt fabulous accounts of ancient times. This then is the point we are to conſider. Let us therefore examine what proofs or arguments he hath brought againſt the truth and credit of the Sacred Hiſtory.

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 202, & ſeq.

Some

Some of the things offered by him to this purpoſe have ſcarce ſo much as the appearance of argument. Of this kind is what he ſaith concerning the uſe that has been made by Jewiſh Rabbies, and Chriſtian fathers, and Mahometan doctors, of the ſhort and imperfect accounts given by Moſes of the times from the creation to the deluge. Let us grant, that the fables they have feigned concerning Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Enoch, Noah, and his ſons, &c. are ſuch as "Bonzes or Talapoins would "almoſt bluſh to relate;" I do not ſee how this can be reaſonably turned to the diſadvantage of the books of Moſes, or hurt the credit of them; ſince his Lordſhip owns, that theſe fables are "pro-"phane extenſions of this part of the Moſaic hiſtory;" and that hiſtory is certainly no-way anſwerable for the additions which have been made to it. It would have been eaſy for Moſes, if he had been a fabulous writer, to have filled up this part of his hiſtory with marvellous relations, and to have embelliſhed it with ſuch fictions, concerning our firſt parents, and the moſt ancient patriarchs, as our author here referreth to: and his not having done ſo is a ſtrong preſumption in his favour, that he did not give way to fancy or invention, but wrote down the facts as they came to him, with an unaffected ſimplicity. His accounts are ſhort, becauſe he kept cloſe to truth, and took care to record no more of thoſe times than he had good information of, or than was neceſſary to the deſign he had in view; which ſeems principally to have been to give a brief account of the creation, the formation of the firſt human pair, the placing them in Paradiſe, the fall, and the flood, which were the moſt remarkable events of that period; and to continue the line from Adam by Seth to Noah, as afterwards he does from him to Abraham.

What his Lordſhip obſerves concerning the blunders of the Jewiſh chronologers*, is not much more to his purpoſe, except he could prove, that thoſe blunders are chargeable upon the Scriptures; which is ſo far from being true, that, if accurately examined, arguments may be brought from thoſe very Scriptures to confute the blunders he mentions.

As to the differences he takes notice of †, between the Scripture-accounts of the Aſſyrian empire, and thoſe given by pro-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 104. † Ibid. p. 114, 115.

ſane authors, *i. e.* by Cteſias, and them that copy from him, very able chronologers have endeavoured to ſhew, that thoſe accounts may be reconciled. But if not, it would only follow, that the Scripture-hiſtory differeth from Cteſias, who, in his Lordſhip's own judgment, and by the acknowledgment of the moſt judicious among the Greeks themſelves, was a very fabulous writer*; and how this can be fairly thought to derogate from the credit and authority of the ſacred hiſtory, I cannot ſee.

But to come to thoſe things on which he ſeems to lay a greater ſtreſs. The ſum of what he hath offered to deſtroy the truth and credit of the ſacred writings amounteth to this: "That the "Jews, upon whoſe faith they are delivered to us, were a people "unknown to the Greeks, till the time of Alexander the Great: "That they had been ſlaves to the Egyptians, Aſſyrians, Medes, "and Perſians, as theſe ſeveral empires prevailed: That a great "part of them had been carried captive, and loſt in the eaſt; "and the remainder were carried captive to Babylon, where "they forgot their country, and even their language:" And he intimates, that "there alſo they loſt their ancient ſacred books: "That they were a ſuperſtitious people, among whom the cuſ-"tom and art of pious lying prevailed remarkably: That the "original of the Scriptures was compiled in their own country, "and, as it were, out of the ſight of the reſt of the world: That "the Jewiſh hiſtory never obtained any credit till Chriſtianity "was eſtabliſhed; but though both Jews and Chriſtians hold the "ſame books in great veneration, yet each condemns the other "for not underſtanding, or for abuſing them: That the accidents "which have happened to alter the text of the bible ſhew, that "it could not have been originally given by divine inſpiration; "and that they are come down to us broken and confuſed, full "of additions, interpolations, and tranſpoſitions: That they are "nothing more than compilations of old traditions, and abridg-"ments of old records made in later times: And that Jews and "Chriſtians differ among themſelves concerning almoſt every "point that is neceſſary to eſtabliſh the authority of thoſe books." He concludes with "ſome obſervations on the curſe ſaid to be "pronounced by Noah upon Canaan," which he would have paſs

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 76. 80.

for

for "an abſurd fiction of the writer of the book of Geneſis;" and he ſeemeth to have ſingled out this as one of the propereſt inſtances he could find for expoſing the Scripture.

Let us conſider theſe things diſtinctly.

It is no juſt prejudice againſt the credit of the Scripture-hiſtory, that the Jews, among whom thoſe writings were preſerved, and whoſe affairs are there recorded, were, as appeareth from thoſe writings, "ſlaves to the Egyptians, Aſſyrians, Medes, and Per-"ſians, as their ſeveral empires prevailed*." It rather furniſheth a proof of the truth and impartiality of thoſe records, that they give an undiſguiſed account, not only of the flouriſhing times of their ſtate (for there were times in which they were flouriſhing, free, and independent), but of their diſgraces, defeats, captivities, and all the calamities that befel them, which, according to theſe accounts, were in a way of juſt puniſhment for their national iniquities, their diſobedience and ingratitude. Yet under all theſe various revolutions, their nation was never entirely loſt, nor incorporated with their conquerors. Though many of them revolted, ſtill there was a number of them that with an unalterable zeal and conſtancy adhered to their ancient religion and laws, which they regarded as of a divine original: a religion remarkably diſtinct from that of the nations to which they were ſubjected, and on the account of which they were frequently expoſed to hatred, perſecution, and reproach.

If the Jews were unknown to the Greeks before Alexander the Great, this affordeth not the leaſt probable preſumption, that their ancient hiſtory is not to be depended upon. The Greeks, by this author's own acknowledgment, did not begin to write hiſtory till very late. The knowledge they had of other nations was very narrow and confined; and, particularly, they were in a great meaſure ſtrangers to the languages, laws, cuſtoms, and hiſtory, of the eaſtern nations. He himſelf obſerves, that after the times of Alexander the Great, and even long after the Jewiſh Scriptures were tranſlated into Greek, the Jews, and their hiſtory were neglected by them, and continued to be almoſt as much unknown as before†. And yet certain it is, that the Jews were then a conſiderable people, and that the Greeks had many oppor-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 84. † Ibid. p. 90.

tunities of being acquainted with them. Let us grant what he inſinuates, that this was owing, not to want of curioſity in the Greeks, ſince they were, as he obſerves, "inquiſitive to the "higheſt degree, and publiſhed as many idle traditions of other "nations as of their own*;" but to the contempt they had for the Jews. What can be inferred from thence? Doth it follow that the Jewiſh Scriptures are not authentic, nor their hiſtories to be credited, becauſe the Greeks neglected or deſpiſed them, and did not own their authority? This is eaſily accounted for by any one that conſiders the nature of the Jewiſh inſtitutions. It is not to be wondered at, that a people ſo exceſſively vain as the Greeks, and who looked upon the reſt of the world as barbarians, ſhould conceive an averſion or contempt for a nation, whoſe laws and religion were ſo different from their own, among whom all image-worſhip was moſt expreſsly prohibited, and no adoration was paid to inferior deities, in which the religion of the Greeks, and of which they were extremely fond, principally conſiſted. If the Jewiſh ſacred books had contained ſtrange ſtories of the exploits of their gods, of their genealogies, battles, and amours, or traditions that tended to ſupport a ſyſtem of idolatry, the Greeks undoubtedly would have been ready enough to tranſcribe theſe things into their writings; theſe fables would have been ſuited to their taſte. But it cannot be ſuppoſed, that they ſhould pay any regard to the accounts given of extraordinary miraculous facts, that were deſigned to eſtabliſh and give ſanction to a conſtitution, the manifeſt tendency of which was to condemn and ſubvert that idolatrous worſhip, to which they were ſo exceſſively addicted.

Among all the heathen nations, none expreſſed a greater enmity to the Jews than the Egyptians, who were themſelves of all people the moſt ſtupidly idolatrous. One of their writers, Apion of Alexandria, is particularly mentioned by our author as having "ſpoken of the Jews in a manner neither much to their honour, "nor to that of their hiſtories." This ſeems to have recommended him to his Lordſhip's favour; for he ſpeaks of him as a man "of much erudition, and as having paſſed for a curious, a labo-"rious, and learned antiquary," though he owns that he paſſed

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 88.

alſo

alſo " for a vain and noiſy pedant*. But if we may judge of him by the fragments of his work which Joſephus has given us, he was, with regard to the Jews, an ignorant and malicious writer, who does not appear to have been acquainted with their hiſtories and laws, though he pretended to write againſt them, and might ſo eaſily have procured information, if he had deſired it. And this appears to have been the caſe of ſeveral others of the heathen writers that mention the Jews. They ſeem not to have given themſelves the trouble to make any diligent inquiry into their hiſtory or laws, as delivered by themſelves, but took up with idle reports and traditions to their prejudice; and yet in the accounts given of the Jews by the heathen writers, imperfect as they are, there are ſome valuable hints and traces to be diſcerned, which ſhew the falſehood of other things they report concerning them†.

It is therefore a little odd, that ſuch a ſtreſs ſhould be laid upon this, that " the Jewiſh hiſtory never obtained any credit in " the world, till Chriſtianity was eſtabliſhed:" *i. e.* it obtained no credit among the heathen nations; or as he elſewhere expreſſeth it, " we do not find, that the authority of theſe books " prevailed among the pagan world‡." How could it be expected that it ſhould? Since the heathens could not acknowledge it, and continue heathens; for it was abſolutely ſubverſive of the whole ſyſtem of paganiſm. The authority of thoſe books was believed and received among all thoſe, by whom it could be reaſonably expected that it ſhould be believed and received: that

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 90, 91.

† There is an heathen writer, of a very different character from Apion, who gives a much more candid account of the Jewiſh nation: I mean the judicious Strabo, of whom our author himſelf ſpeaks with the higheſt eſteem. He makes the cauſe of Moſes's forſaking Egypt to be his being diſſatisfied with the falſe notions of God, and his worſhip, that had obtained among the Egyptians; and ſuppoſes him to have entertained juſter and nobler notions of the divinity than the Egyptians, or Lybians, or Greeks: that with him went from Egypt *many that honoured the deity*, πολλοὶ τιμῶντες τὸ Θεῖον; that he *perſuaded many good men*, and brought them into the country where Jeruſalem is built; and that there they continued, *practiſing juſtice* or *righteouſneſs*, and being *truly religious, or ſincere worſhippers of God*, δικαιοπραγοῦντες καὶ ἐυσεβεῖς ὡς ἀληθῶς ὄντες, but that afterwards they degenerated.—See Strabo, lib. xvi.

‡ Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 87, 91.

is, it was acknowledged and received by that nation among whom thoſe writings, and the memory of the laws and facts, had been conſtantly preſerved, and who regarded them with great veneration, as of a divine original; and alſo by thoſe among the heathens themſelves, who, upon the credit of the Jewiſh religion, laws, and records, quitted the heathen idolatry: and theſe were all that could be reaſonably expected to acknowledge the authority of the Jewiſh ſacred books, even ſuppoſing their authority to have been ever ſo well founded.

But it is urged as a ground of ſuſpicion againſt the Jewiſh Scriptures, that "they were compiled in their own country, "and, as it were, out of the ſight of the reſt of the world." And it was certainly moſt proper, that the books in which their laws, and the moſt remarkable events relating to their nation, are recorded, ſhould be publiſhed in their own country, the ſcene where the chief actions were laid. This is no diminution of their credit, but the contrary; and if they had been compiled in any other country, or by foreigners, and perſons not of their own nation, it might have been ſaid, and not without ſome appearance of reaſon, that they might be miſtaken, and take up with wrong and imperfect accounts, both of laws and facts.

But what this author ſeems chiefly to inſiſt upon, to ſhew that little credit is to be given to theſe writings, is, "that they are "hiſtories delivered to us on the faith of a ſuperſtitious people; "among whom the cuſtom and art of pious lying prevailed "remarkably*."

In order to form a proper judgment of this matter, let us take a brief view of the Jewiſh Scriptures, that we may ſee what likelihood there is of their having been feigned by a ſuperſtitious and lying people.

In general, it may be obſerved, that if we compare the ſacred books of the Jews with thoſe of any other the moſt admired nations, ſuch as Greece and Rome, we ſhall ſoon ſee a moſt ſtriking and amazing difference. Their whole conſtitution was of a peculiar nature; ſo vaſtly different from that of other countries, that it well deſerveth the attention and admiration of every impartial and conſidering obſerver. It was the only conſtitution in the world, where the acknowledgment and worſhip of

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 87.

the

the one true God, the ſovereign Lord of the univerſe, and of him alone, is made the fundamental maxim of their ſtate, and principle of their government, in which all their laws centre, and the main end to which they are all directed. All worſhip of inferior deities is forbidden; no deified heroes admitted; no images ſuffered. Many of their ſacred rites ſeem to have been inſtituted in a deſigned oppoſition to thoſe of the neighbouring nations, that they might not incorporate with them, or learn their idolatrous cuſtoms, to which the Iſraelites, for a long time, were very prone. Nor is there any likelihood that they would have embraced or ſubmitted to a conſtitution ſo different from the then generally prevailing idolatry, if it had not been for the manifeſt proofs that were given them of its divine original. The author of theſe Letters indeed intimates, that many of their rites were derived from the Egyptians; but whatever conformity there might be in ſome particular inſtances, nothing is more certain and evident, than that the whole ſyſtem of the Jewiſh religion was moſt eſſentially oppoſite to that of the Egyptians, and other pagan nations, and tended to caſt contempt on their adored deities, and on that idolatrous worſhip to which the heathens were ſo much addicted, and which was eſtabliſhed by the laws of their reſpective countries.

As to the moral and devotional treatiſes, which make up another part of their ſacred writings, they are inconteſtably excellent. Their poetry is of a moſt divine ſtrain, far ſuperior to that of other ancient nations, having an unexampled dignity, elevation, and ſublimity in it, filled with the nobleſt ſentiments of the Divinity, and of his glorious incomparable perfections, and governing providence.

The ſame obſervation may be made on the prophetical writings, in which we may diſcern many remarkable characters of genuine truth and purity. A fervent zeal for God, and for pure and undefiled religion, every-where appears: nor is there any thing in them that breathes the ſpirit of this world, or that ſavours of ambition, artifice, or impoſture. The whole intention of them is manifeſtly to reclaim the people from idolatry, vice, and wickedneſs, to engage them to the pure worſhip of God, and to the practice of univerſal righteouſneſs. With a noble freedom and impartiality do they reprove their kings,

princes, prieſts, people; denouncing the moſt awful threatenings againſt them, if they ſhould perſiſt in their evil and ſinful courſes; and encouraging them with the moſt gracious promiſes to repentance, and new obedience: and all this mixed with many remarkable and expreſs predictions of future events, which no human ſagacity could have foreſeen, and which derived ſuch an authority to them, that though they were often reproached and perſecuted when alive, their character and writings were afterwards regarded by the whole nation with the profoundeſt veneration. And it deſerveth to be particularly remarked, that whereas the Jews, as well as mankind in all ages, have been prone to place religion chiefly in external forms, and ritual obſervances, as if theſe would compenſate for the neglect of the moral precepts, there are many paſſages in their ſacred books, eſpecially thoſe of the prophets, which in the ſtrongeſt terms repreſent the utter inſufficiency of all ritual obſervances without real holineſs of heart and life, and even ſpeak of them in a very diminutive manner, and with a ſeeming contempt, when oppoſed to or abſtracted from moral goodneſs and virtue; and ſuch writings certainly do not look like the inventions of a ſuperſtitious and lying people.

But as the ſacred hiſtory is what this writer ſetteth himſelf particularly to expoſe and invalidate, let us take a brief view of the hiſtorical parts of Scripture; and theſe are no leſs remarkable, and worthy of our attention, than the laws, the prophecies, the moral and devotional writings.

As to a general idea of their hiſtory, it is of as different a complexion from that of other nations as their laws, and is of the ſame noble tendency with their other ſacred books. It everywhere breathes the profoundeſt veneration for the Deity. The chief deſign of it is not merely to anſwer civil or political views, or to preſerve the annals of their nation, or trace it up to its original (though this alſo is done), but for nobler purpoſes; to promote the true worſhip of God, and the practice of piety and virtue; to preſerve the remembrance of God's wonderful works of providence towards his profeſſing people; to ſhew the favours, the bleſſings, the deliverances, vouchſafed to them, the proſperity and happineſs they enjoyed, when they kept cloſe to the laws of God, and continued in the practice of virtue and righteouſneſs;

righteouſneſs; and on the other hand, the great calamities which befel them when they broke the divine law and covenant, and lapſed into idolatry, vice, and wickedneſs. Such are the uſeful leſſons which their hiſtory is deſigned to teach, and to this excellent end is it directed.

To which it may be added, that there are obſervable in it remarkable characters of ſimplicity, and an impartial regard to truth. It is plain, from the whole tenor of their hiſtory, that it was not compiled to give falſe and flattering accounts of their nation, or partial and elegant encomiums of their great men. Their great actions indeed are recorded, but their faults are alſo related, with a ſimplicity and impartiality that deſerves to be admired. Neither Romans, Greeks, Egyptians, nor any other people, have formed their hiſtories ſo much to the diſadvantage of their own nation, or charged them with ſuch repeated revolts from the religion and laws of their country. Let us ſuppoſe the Jews ever ſo much poſſeſſed with the ſpirit of lying, it would never have put them upon forging a body of hiſtory ſo much to the prejudice of their own national character. It tendeth indeed to give an high idea of the great things God had done for them, of the privileges conferred upon them, and the excellency of their laws (and that their laws are excellent, no man can doubt that ſeriouſly reads and conſiders them), but at the ſame time it ſetteth the ingratitude, the diſobedience, the ſtupidity, of that people, their oppoſition to God's authority, and abuſe of his goodneſs, their manifold backſlidings and unſtedfaſtneſs in his covenant, in the ſtrongeſt light. Their diſgraces, defeats, captivities, are no-where concealed; they are repreſented as frequently brought under the yoke of the neighbouring nations, in a manner much to their diſhonour; and their deliverances are aſcribed, not to their own wiſdom, conduct, and bravery, but to the mercy of God, upon their repentance. In a word, their hiſtory is a continued account of God's goodneſs, patience, and juſtice, exerciſed towards them; and of their own ſtrange, perverſe, and unaccountable conduct. This is ſo manifeſt, that it hath been often turned to their reproach, and hath given occaſion to the repreſenting them as an obſtinate, ungrateful, and rebellious race, and to ſuch a charge as St. Stephen advanceth

advanceth againſt them from their own Scriptures: *Ye ſtiff-necked, and uncircumciſed in heart and ears, ye do always reſiſt the Holy Ghoſt: as your fathers did, ſo do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers perſecuted?* Acts vii. 51. Theſe conſiderations naturally tend to derive a peculiar credit to the Jewiſh Scriptures, as containing true and faithful accounts, not forged by a ſuperſtitious lying people. Whatever opinion therefore we may have of the Jews, yet their ſacred books deſerve great regard. Nor is there any ground to ſuppoſe, that theſe books of records were of their inventing. At leaſt, I believe, this will ſcarce be pretended with regard to the Jews in the latter times of their ſtate, however they might otherwiſe be addicted to fiction and embelliſhment. They received theſe books as ſacred from their anceſtors, and were themſelves ſo fully perſuaded of the divine original and authority of their laws, and the certainty and authenticity of theſe records, that they adhered to them with a zeal ſcarce to be paralleled in any other nation. So great was the veneration they had for them, that after the canon was completed, they were extremely ſcrupulous not to make any additions to their ſacred books, or receive any others into their number as of equal authority, though written by the greateſt and wiſeſt men of their nation. And if any perſons had endeavoured to alter or corrupt them, the fraud, the impoſture, muſt have been immediately detected. For theſe ſacred books were not, like thoſe of other nations, confined to the prieſts only; they were in the hands of the people, conſtantly and publicly read in their ſynagogues; the laws, and the facts, were what they were all acquainted with, and inſtructed in from their infancy.

If therefore there be any ground of ſuſpicion, it muſt fall, not upon the latter Jews, but upon Ezra, and thoſe by whom the ſacred canon was finiſhed. If their hiſtory and ſacred books were forged or corrupted, the moſt likely time that can be fixed for it, is upon their return from the Babyloniſh captivity. And this ſeems to be the æra fixed upon by the author of theſe Letters. He obſerves, that "the Babyloniſh captivity laſted ſo "long, and ſuch circumſtances, whatever they were, accom-"panied it, that the captives forgot their country, and even their "language,

" language, the Hebrew dialect, at leaſt, and character*." And afterwards he intimates, that the Scriptures were " loſt during " the captivity†." And he obſerves, that " Ezra began, and " Simon the Juſt finiſhed, the canon of the Scriptures‡."

Let us grant, that in the Babyloniſh captivity, the Jews learned the Chaldee language, which thenceforth became more familiar to them than the Hebrew; and that the old Hebrew character was, as many learned men ſuppoſe, though it is far from being certain, changed for the Chaldee; the latter being fairer, eaſier, and more generally uſed among the people; yet this is far from proving, either that the Hebrew language was entirely forgotten by them, or that their ſacred books were loſt in the captivity. There are many things that plainly ſhew the contrary. The prophet Ezekiel, who propheſied during the capitivity to the Jews in Chaldea, wrote and publiſhed his prophecies in Hebrew. So did the prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, who propheſied ſeveral years after the return from the Babyloniſh captivity: which ſhews, that the Hebrew language was ſtill in uſe, and was underſtood by many of the people. The ſame thing may be concluded from this; that all the ſacred books that were written after the captivity were written in Hebrew, except a part of Ezra and Daniel. Nehemiah, who had been a great man in the Perſian court, wrote his own memoirs in Hebrew: which ſhews, that the Jews who continued in Perſia, their great men at leaſt, ſtill retained the knowledge of that language. And as the Hebrew language was not abſolutely forgotten among the Jews in their captivity, ſo neither were their ſacred books entirely loſt. Indeed it were abſurd to ſuppoſe it. That captivity, though it laſted ſeventy years from the firſt beginning of it under Jehoiakim, yet from the time of the utter deſolation of Jeruſalem, and the temple, and the carrying away the laſt remainder of the people to Babylon, continued but about fifty years. And there were not a few of them that had been carried away from Jeruſalem, who ſurvived the whole time, and lived to come back. *Many of the prieſts and Levites, and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had ſeen the firſt houſe, when the foundation of the ſecond houſe was laid before their eyes, wept*

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 84. † Ibid. p. 101. ‡ Ibid. p. 85.

with a loud voice, Ezra iii. 12. All thoſe among them that lived to ſeventy or eighty years were twenty or thirty years old when Jeruſalem and the temple were deſtroyed; and to ſuppoſe, that theſe ſhould entirely forget their language, or their religion, hiſtory, and laws, is very abſurd: add to this, that the people were in expectation of a deliverance, and reſtitution to their own land, of which the prophets had aſſured them; and this would naturally make them more careful to preſerve their laws, and the ancient authentic records and memorials of their nation. It appeareth from the accounts given of thoſe that returned, that many of the prieſts, the Levites, the ſingers, the porters, the Nethinims, &c. had preſerved their genealogies during the captivity, in proſpect of their return, and of their being again employed in the ſacred functions; and thoſe who could not clearly ſhew their genealogies, were put from the prieſthood, Ezra ii. 62. Neh. vii. 64. Great numbers of the people could alſo prove their genealogies: and where there were any that could not do this, it is particularly taken notice of, that *they could not ſhew their father's houſe*, Ezra ii. 59. It is manifeſt therefore, that there were *regiſters* of genealogies preſerved in Babylon; and is it not reaſonable to conclude, that they would be no leſs careful to preſerve their ſacred books, eſpecially thoſe of Moſes, in which were their original records, and the laws on which their whole conſtitution depended?

If the Jews had been for changing their own laws and cuſtoms, we may ſuppoſe it muſt have been in order to their adopting thoſe of their conquerors, and of the country to which they were tranſplanted, and in which they ſettled. But it is evident, that, in fact, they did not do this; ſince the whole ſyſtem of their worſhip and conſtitution was, upon their return, very different from that of the Babylonians. If therefore they learned their language, or uſed their letters and characters in writing; yet ſtill it is certain, that they worſhipped not their gods, nor adopted their religion, and ſacred rites. They ſtill preſerved their own; and the captivity and deſolation of their nation, which they looked upon as a puniſhment for their manifold revolts, idolatries, and deviations from their law, tended to increaſe, inſtead of extinguiſhing, their veneration for it.

By Daniel's ſolemn ſupplication and faſting, when the time came

came that had been marked out in the prophecies for their return, it appeareth, that he had the book of Jeremiah's Prophecies before him, Dan. ix. 2. And the confeſſion he there maketh is remarkable: *All Iſrael have tranſgreſſed thy law—therefore the curſe is come upon us; and the oath that is written in the law of Moſes, the ſervant of God, becauſe we have ſinned againſt him—And he hath confirmed his words which he ſpake againſt us, and againſt our judges that judged us—As it is written in the law of Moſes, all this evil is come upon us*, ver. 11, 12, 13. Here it is plainly ſuppoſed, that there was a written law of Moſes extant in his time, known to him and to the people, and which was regarded as the law of God himſelf: that they had tranſgreſſed that law, and thereby had expoſed themſelves to the dreadful judgment denounced againſt them, and written in that law, as the juſt puniſhment of their revolt and diſobedience. Soon after this, when the people returned, under the conduct of Zerubbabel, Jeſhua, and others, we find them gathered together to celebrate the feaſt of tabernacles, in the ſeventh month, and offering the *daily burnt offerings*, and thoſe of the *new-moons*, and *ſet feaſts*, beſides *free-will offerings:* and all this is ſaid to be done as *written in the law of Moſes*, Ezra iii. 1—6.: and this plainly ſheweth, that they had the written law of Moſes with them. They alſo appointed the prieſts and Levites, in their ſeveral courſes, and the ſingers, and ſervice of the temple, *according to the ordinances of David, the man of God*, Ezra iii. 10, 11. The ſacred hymns or pſalms, therefore, that had been uſed in the temple worſhip, were not loſt in the captivity; and indeed the Pſalms of David carry evident characters of genuineneſs in them. They were many of them compoſed on ſpecial occaſions, and adapted to his peculiar circumſtances, in a manner which plainly ſhewed they were not forged in after-times. And the preſerving ſo many of the pſalms and hymns, ſome of which contain an abridgment of their ſacred hiſtory, is a manifeſt indication of the care they took; and that there was not a general deſtruction of their ſacred books in the captivity. The ſame obſervation may be applied to the prophetical writings, and to their ſacred records. It is plain, that the hiſtory of their kings was preſerved; to which there is frequent reference in the books compiled after the Babyloniſh captivity.

The

The commiſſion afterwards given to Ezra by Artaxerxes, plainly ſuppoſed the law of Moſes to be then in being, and in the higheſt authority; and only empowered him to regulate every thing according to that law. He is deſcribed in Artaxerxes's commiſſion as *a ready ſcribe in the law of Moſes:* as one greatly ſkilled in that law, and fit to inſtruct others in it; and is required to ſet magiſtrates and judges to judge the people, ſuch as *knew the law of God*, Ezra vii. 6. 10. 25. Soon after Ezra came Nehemiah, a great man in the Perſian court, and who was appointed governor of Judea; and every thing throughout his book diſcovereth, that he and the whole people profeſſed the higheſt veneration for the law of Moſes. Before he came to Judea, he was well acquainted with that law, and regarded it as of divine authority, Neh. i. 7, 8, 9. During his adminiſtration, we have an account of a ſolemn reading of the law, by Ezra, in the hearing of all the people; who heard it with the utmoſt reverence and attention: in this he was aſſiſted by ſeveral Levites, who *read in the book, in the law of God, diſtinctly, and gave the ſenſe, and cauſed them to underſtand the reading*, Neh. viii. 1—9. Again, we are told of another ſolemn reading of the law, before all the people, Neh. ix. 1, 2, 3. And in the admirable confeſſion made on that occaſion by the Levites, there is an excellent ſummary of the principal events recorded in the hiſtorical parts of the books of Moſes; ſuch as the calling of Abraham; their bondage and oppreſſion in Egypt; their being brought out from thence with ſigns and wonders, and dreadful judgments executed upon Pharaoh and his people; the dividing of the ſea before them, ſo that they paſſed through it as on dry land, whilſt the Egyptians that purſued them were overwhelmed in the deep; the promulgation of the law at Sinai, with remarkable tokens of the divine preſence and glory; the miracles wrought in the wilderneſs, the leading them by a cloud in the day, and a pillar of fire by night; the giving them manna-bread from heaven to eat, and cleaving the rock to give them water to drink: and finally, bringing them into poſſeſſion of the land of Canaan. Theſe things, which are the moſt remarkable facts in the hiſtory of their nation, together with their frequent rebellions, diſobedience, and ingratitude, particularly their making and worſhipping the molten calf in the wilderneſs, the ſtanding diſgrace of their nation, and their ſubſequent

ſequent revolts, calamities, and deliverances, after they came into the land of Canaan, are there taken notice of in the public confeſſions and acknowledgments made to God in the name and preſence of all the people; and are mentioned as things commonly known and acknowledged among them, and as of undoubted truth and certainty.

Taking theſe things together, it ſeems to appear, with all the evidence which the nature of the thing is capable of, that the Jewiſh ſacred books and records were not loſt in the Babyloniſh captivity; that they were in poſſeſſion of them, and held them in great veneration, before Ezra came to Jeruſalem: and it would be a wild imagination to ſuppoſe, that he had it in his power, even if he had it in his inclination, ſo far to impoſe upon all the Jews, both thoſe in Judea, and thoſe that continued in Babylon, and other parts of the Perſian empire, as to make them all with one conſent receive thoſe for their ancient laws, by which their nation had been always governed, which were not their ancient laws; and thoſe for their ancient authentic hiſtories, and ſacred records, which were not the ancient authentic records. All that his commiſſion from Artaxerxes extended to, was, to order things according to the law of Moſes; and this he effected. When he came, he found ſeveral abuſes contrary to that law, countenanced by men of great power and intereſt, and in which ſeveral of the chief prieſts, as well as numbers of the people, were engaged; and he ſet himſelf to reform them according to that law; and theſe regulations would not have been tamely ſubmitted to, if it had not been well known, that the laws and conſtitutions he urged upon them, were the true original laws of Moſes.

As to the eſtabliſhing the ſacred canon, which is attributed to Ezra, and to thoſe whom the Jews call the men of the great ſynagogue, the laſt of whom was Simon the Juſt, this is not to be underſtood as if theſe books were not accounted ſacred, or were regarded as of no authority before. The books were already well known, and looked upon as ſacred: they had not their authority, becauſe Ezra acknowledged them: but he collected and publiſhed them, becauſe they were known to be authentic. It may indeed be well ſuppoſed, that faults and variations might have crept into the copies of thoſe books, and that they needed

to

to be carefully reviſed: and this was a work for which Ezra was admirably fitted, by his great ſkill in the law, and in the ſacred records of his nation, as well as his noted integrity. And if he accordingly reviſed the original ſacred books, and publiſhed a more correct edition of them, or abridged ſome of their ancient records, to render them of more general uſe among the people, and here and there inſerted ſome paſſages, for explaining and illuſtrating things that were grown obſcure; this was certainly a work of great uſe. And ſuppoſing him to have done this, and that this work continued to be afterwards carried on by ſome of the moſt knowing and excellent men of their nation, till it was with great care completed, I do not ſee how it in the leaſt affects the authority or credibility of thoſe books. The whole nation in general were ſo ſenſible of Ezra's great fidelity and diligence, that he was always afterwards had in the higheſt honour: and they were ſo convinced that theſe were the original ſacred books, that they received them with an extraordinary veneration. Nor did they ever pay the ſame regard to any other ſubſequent writings in their own nation: and though the Sanhedrim continued to have great authority among them, they never pretended to put any other books upon them as divine, or as of equal authority with the ſacred books. Now how comes it, that they put ſo great a difference between them, and that the authority of theſe books was univerſally acknowledged by the whole nation, and the other not? This ſheweth, that however credulous the Jews might be in other things, yet they were particularly exact and ſcrupulous in not receiving any books into the ſacred canon, but what they judged they had good reaſon to look upon as authentic.

The moſt remarkable part of the Jewiſh hiſtory is, that which is contained in the books of Moſes. It is there we have an account of the firſt conſtitution of their ſacred polity; the promulgation of the ten commandments, with the moſt amazing demonſtrations of a divine power and majeſty; and the extraordinary miraculous facts done in Egypt and in the wilderneſs, by which the authority of that law was eſtabliſhed. And whoſoever alloweth this part of the Jewiſh hiſtory to be authentic, will not much ſcruple the ſubſequent parts of their hiſtory. Now it is evident, that as it was not Ezra that gave authority to the law of Moſes, which was in the higheſt authority before, or who cauſed the

the people to receive it as divine; ſo neither were the *facts*, whereby the authority of that law was atteſted, *firſt* publiſhed by him. They had been all along believed, and the remembrance of them kept up, among the people. *The books of Moſes* exhibit a remarkable intermixture of *laws* and *facts*: and it appears to have been ſo from the beginning, though our author inſinuates the contrary, but gives no reaſon for it *. And it was wiſely ordered, that the facts ſhould go along with the laws; ſeveral of which ſuppoſe thoſe facts, and have a manifeſt relation to them. And as the laws were received with great veneration, ſo the facts were equally received and believed among the people, in all ages, from the time in which thoſe laws were given. And it deſerveth to be remarked, that the facts were of ſuch a kind, that they could not have been impoſed upon the people, however ſtupid we ſuppoſe them to have been, at the time the laws were given, if they had not been true. If Moſes had only told the Iſraelites, as Mahomet did the Arabians, inſtead of working miracles before them, as they demanded, of a journey he made to heaven, where he received the law: or as Numa did the ancient Romans, of conferences he had with the goddeſs Egeria in a wood or grove, to which no other perſons were witneſſes, and which depended entirely upon his own word; this might have adminiſtered ground of ſuſpicion, that he only feigned a divine commiſſion, the more effectually to enforce his laws upon an ignorant and ſuperſtitious people. But he took a quite different method. The facts he relateth, and upon the credit of which the divine authority of his laws is reſted, were of a moſt public nature, done in open view before the people, of which they were all ſaid to be witneſſes, and in which therefore, if they had not been true, it would have been the eaſieſt thing in the world to have detected him. And indeed, conſidering the ſtubborn diſpoſition of the people, and their great proneneſs to idolatry, it can ſcarce be conceived, that they would have received or ſubmitted to ſuch a law and conſtitution, if they themſelves had not been aſſured of the truth of thoſe facts whereby the divinity of it was confirmed. In the admirable recapitulation of the law, contained in the book of Deuteronomy, which

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 100.

carrieth as ſtrong evidences of genuine *antiquity*, *ſimplicity*, and *integrity*, as any writings can poſſibly have, and in which he delivereth himſelf with an inimitable gravity, dignity, and authority, mixed with the moſt affectionate tenderneſs and concern, as becometh the lawgiver and father of his people, and exhorteth them to the obſervance of the law in the moſt pathetical and engaging manner; there is a conſtant reference to the great and extraordinary facts wrought in Egypt, and in the wilderneſs; an appeal is made to the people concerning them, as things which they themſelves had ſeen and known. And never was there greater care taken to preſerve a remembrance of any laws and facts than there was of theſe. He delivered the book of the law, containing an account both of laws and facts, not only to the *prieſts*, but to *the elders of Iſrael*, the heads of the ſeveral tribes, before his death: and the original of the law was depoſited in the ſides of the ark, in the moſt holy place. A moſt ſolemn charge was laid upon the people, in the name of God, as they valued his favour, and their own happineſs, frequently to conſider thoſe laws and facts themſelves, and to teach them diligently to their children. Sacred rites were inſtituted, and public feſtivals appointed, to preſerve the memorials of the principal facts, from the time in which thoſe facts were done. And accordingly the remembrance of them was conſtantly preſerved among them in all ages. In all the ſucceeding monuments of their nation, throughout their whole hiſtory, and in their devotional and prophetical writings, and in their public ſolemn forms of confeſſion and thankſgiving, there was ſtill a conſtant reference to thoſe facts as of undoubted credit; and upon the credit of thoſe facts, thoſe laws were both at firſt received, and continued afterwards to be acknowledged and ſubmitted to: for notwithſtanding the frequent defections of the people to the idolatrous rites and cuſtoms of the neighbouring nations, yet they never totally and univerſally apoſtatiſed from the law of Moſes, but ſtill acknowledged its ſacredneſs and divine authority*.

* That the law of Moſes, with the facts there recorded, may be traced, from the time in which that law was given, and the facts done, through all the ſucceeding ages of the Jewiſh nation; and that we have all the evidence of their having been tranſmitted without any material corruption or alteration, that can be reaſonably deſired; I have elſewhere more fully ſhewn, in the *Anſwer to Chriſtianity as old as the Creation*, vol. ii. chap. 4.

The

The author of theſe Letters taketh particular notice of the fables invented by the Helleniſtic Jews, to authorize the Greek verſion of the Hebrew Scriptures*. But I do not ſee how any argument can be fairly drawn from theſe fables to the prejudice of the ſacred books themſelves, which were thus tranſlated, or to deſtroy their authority or credibility. The ſtrong perſuaſion they had of the divine authority of the original Scriptures, might make the Jews at Alexandria more ready to entertain ſtories in favour of the tranſlation of theſe Scriptures into Greek, from which they found great benefit; this being the language they beſt underſtood, and which was then become of general uſe. But thoſe ſtories were not generally received by the Jewiſh nation, though they all univerſally agreed in acknowledging the authority of the originals; nor were they ever inſerted in the ſacred writings, or in any books, the authority of which was generally received among them.

The firſt thing that gave riſe to thoſe ſtories was, the hiſtory of Ariſteas; which ſeems to have been contrived on purpoſe to do honour to that verſion, and gives a pompous account of it. And yet even in that hiſtory there is nothing ſaid of thoſe miraculous circumſtances, which were afterwards invented to ſhew, that thoſe interpreters were under an extraordinary divine guidance. On the contrary, that book, though it be the foundation of all that is ſaid concerning the Septuagint, may be proved to be plainly inconſiſtent with thoſe ſubſequent fables and fictions, and is ſufficient to detect the falſity of them. There is therefore no parallel at all between theſe Helliniſtical fables, and the ſacred Hebrew records; except it could be proved, that one part of thoſe ancient records is inconſiſtent with other ſubſequent parts of them, and furniſhes manifeſt proofs of their falſehood; which neither his Lordſhip, nor any other, has been able to ſhew.

Another argument, on which he ſeems to lay a mighty ſtreſs, in order to ſet aſide the authority of the Scripture, is drawn from the accidents that have happened to the ſacred text. He will not allow the anſwer made by Abbadie and others, that "ſuch "accidents could not have been prevented without a perpetual "ſtanding miracle, and that a perpetual ſtanding miracle is not

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 85, 86.

" in the order of Providence." On the contrary, it ſeems evident to him, that if the Scriptures had been originally given by divine inſpiration, " either ſuch accidents would not have hap-" pened, or the Scriptures would have been preſerved entirely in " their genuine purity, notwithſtanding theſe accidents." He thinks the proof of this " is obvious and eaſy, according to our " cleareſt and moſt diſtinct ideas of wiſdom, and moral fitneſs*." But, beſides that the preſent queſtion, as he has managed it, relating to the ſacred hiſtory, is not about the divine inſpiration of it, but whether it be a true and faithful hiſtory, an honeſt and credible relation of facts, which he abſolutely denies; I ſee no conſequence at all in his way of reaſoning, even if the queſtion were, whether thoſe ſacred books were originally written by perſons divinely inſpired. For all that could be reaſonably concluded, ſuppoſing any books to have been originally given by divine inſpiration, is, that Providence would take care, that thoſe books ſhould be tranſmitted with a ſufficient degree of certainty and integrity, to anſwer the end for which they were originally intended. But it was no-way neceſſary to this purpoſe, that all the tranſcribers that ſhould ever copy theſe writings in any age or nation, ſhould be under an infallible guidance, ſo as to be kept by an extraordinary interpoſition from ever committing any miſtake or blunder, or being guilty of any ſlips or negligences; or that all thoſe that have ever reviſed and compared thoſe copies, ſhould, in every inſtance, be infallibly guided in their judgments concerning them. This is evidently abſurd. It would be multiplying miracles without neceſſity, and would therefore be unworthy of the divine wiſdom, and not very conſiſtent with the methods of God's moral government of men, conſidered as reaſonable creatures, free agents. For, will any man, in good earneſt, undertake to prove, that ſuppoſing an excellent revelation given, of doctrines, laws, &c. together with authentic accounts of extraordinary facts, tending to confirm and eſtabliſh the divine authority of thoſe doctrines and laws, this revelation could not be of any uſe, nor could thoſe accounts of facts be at all fit to be depended on, if there were any variations, omiſſions, tranſpoſitions, or miſtakes, in any copies of them that ſhould be

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 95.

taken

taken of them in any age? If, notwithſtanding thoſe variations, the copies ſhould ſtill ſo far agree, that from thence a ſufficient notion might be formed of the doctrines and laws contained in that original revelation, and of the truth of the facts whereby it was atteſted and confirmed, this would be ſufficient to anſwer the end which we might ſuppoſe the divine wiſdom to have had in view in giving ſuch a revelation. And this is actually the caſe with regard to the holy Scriptures. Whatever *additions*, *interpolations*, or *tranſpoſitions*, may be ſuppoſed to have crept into any of the copies, yet all the main laws and facts are ſtill preſerved. Of this we have a remarkable proof, by comparing the Hebrew and Samaritan codes of the Pentateuch. There are differences between them: but the laws, the precepts, the hiſtory, the important facts, whereby the law was atteſted, are the ſame in both. And in general it may be juſtly affirmed, that notwithſtanding all the differences in the copies, about which ſuch a clamour has been raiſed, yet there is a ſufficient agreement among them to ſatisfy us, that ſuch and ſuch laws were originally given, ſuch prophecies were delivered, and that ſuch facts were done: and the variations among the copies in ſmaller matters, the miſtakes that have crept into the genealogies, numbers, dates, catalogues of names, ages of ſome of the patriarchs, and the like (for it is in theſe things that the differences principally lie), do really confirm their harmony in the main; and therefore are far from deſtroying the authority of the ſacred writings, or the credibility of the ſcripture hiſtory.

The learned Capellus, who had thoroughly conſidered this matter, and who, it is well known, allowed himſelf great liberties in judging concerning the variations in the copies of the Hebrew Scriptures, juſtly obſerveth, in his defence of his *Critica Sacra*, that all theſe variations are of little or no moment as to faith or manners; ſo that in that reſpect it is indifferent which reading we follow: *Sanè omnes illæ varietates, uti ſæpius in Critica Sacra repeto, nullius aut penè nullius ſunt quoad fidem et mores momenti, ut eo reſpectu perinde ſit hanc an illam ſequaris lectionem.* And I believe there are few competent and impartial judges of theſe things, but will be ready to own, with M. Le Clerc, the freedom of whoſe judgment in ſuch matters muſt be acknowledged, that, through the good providence of God, no books,

from the earlieſt antiquity, have come to us equally correct with the ſacred books of the Hebrews, particularly the Maſoretical copies. *Nullos libros ex ultima antiquitate ad nos, Dei beneficio, perveniſſe æquè emendatos ac ſacros Hebræorum codices, et quidem Maſoreticos.* See his *Diſſertatio de Lingua Hebræa*, prefixed to his *Commentary on the Pentateuch*.

What our author himſelf maketh a ſhew of granting is very true, that—" amidſt all the changes and chances to which the " books, in which they are recorded, have been expoſed, neither " original writers nor later compilers, have been ſuffered to make " any eſſential alterations, ſuch as would have falſified the law " of God, and the principles of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian reli- " gion, in any of thoſe divine fundamental points *." And indeed the precepts, the doctrines of religion inculcated in the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament, are ſo frequently repeated, and the principal facts there related are ſo often referred to, in different parts of thoſe ſacred volumes, as to be abundantly ſufficient to anſwer the deſign for which they were originally intended; *viz.* to inſtruct men in the knowledge, adoration, and obedience of the one true God, and to engage them to the practice of righteouſneſs, and to prepare the way for a more perfect diſpenſation, which was to be introduced, in the fulneſs of time, by that Divine Perſon, whoſe *coming*, *character*, *offices*, *ſufferings*, *glory*, and *kingdom*, were there prefigured and foretold. Accordingly our Saviour ſpeaketh of the writings of Moſes and the Prophets, as of ſignal uſe to inſtruct and direct men in the knowledge and practice of religion, Luke xvi. 29, 30, 31. And though it be not true, which our author aſſerteth, that the Jewiſh Scriptures had no authority but what they derived from Chriſtianity (for they had an authority founded upon ſufficient credentials before Chriſtianity was eſtabliſhed); yet their being acknowledged as divine by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, giveth them a farther confirmation: for when a ſubſequent revelation, which is itſelf founded on convincing proofs and evidences, giveth teſtimony to a prior revelation, and referreth to it as of divine authority; when both together concur to form one ſyſtem of religion, and to exhibit the hiſtory of God's various diſpenſations towards his Church, the former being ſubſervient and preparatory to the

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 97, 98.

latter,

latter, and the latter giving farther light and a fuller completion to the former; this confirmeth the authority of both, and ſheweth one great uniform deſign and plan carried on by the divine wiſdom and goodneſs from the beginning.

It is no juſt objection againſt the authority of the ſacred books of the Old Teſtament, though the writer of theſe letters ſeems to think it ſo, that "though Jews and Chriſtians hold the ſame books "in great veneration, yet each condemns the other for not un- "derſtanding, or for abuſing, them*." This is to be underſtood, not of the ſacred hiſtory, which yet he would be thought to have particularly in view; for, as to this, the Jews and Chriſtians are generally agreed; but of ſome paſſages in the prophetical writings, in the interpretation of which they differ. And with reſpect to theſe, it may be obſerved, that if the Jews, at the time of our Saviour's appearing, had univerſally interpreted the prophetical writings as the Chriſtians do, and applied them to Jeſus Chriſt; and had accordingly turned Chriſtians, and embraced Jeſus as the Meſſiah promiſed to their fathers; it would undoubtedly have been alleged, that they forged or corrupted the prophecies in favour of the Chriſtian ſyſtem; whereas now there is no room for this pretence. Their vouching and acknowledging thoſe writings, as of divine authority, notwithſtanding the difficulty they have been put to in anſwering the arguments brought from thence againſt their own favourite notions and prejudices, giveth their teſtimony to the prophetical books great force.

There is another remarkable paſſage in his third letter, which it is proper to take ſome notice of. He obſerves †, that "the "Jews and Chriſtians differ among themſelves, and from one "another, concerning almoſt every point that is neceſſary to be "known and agreed upon, in order to eſtabliſh the authority of "books which both have received as authentic and ſacred. Who "were the authors of theſe ſcriptures, when they were publiſhed, "how they were compoſed, and preſerved, or renewed; in fine, "how they were loſt during the captivity, and how they were "retrieved after it; are all matters of controverſy to this day." That the ſacred books were *not loſt* in the captivity, and that conſequently they were *not retrieved* after it by immediate inſpiration,

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 92. † Ibid. p. 100, 101.

hath been clearly ſhewn: a fiction which ſeems to have had its riſe from the apocryphal ſecond book of Eſdras, the authority of which never was acknowledged either in the Jewiſh or Chriſtian church. There are indeed differences, both among Jews and Chriſtians, concerning ſeveral points relating to theſe ſacred books; but theſe differences are, for the moſt part, about things that do not properly concern the divine authority or credibility of thoſe writings. There is a general agreement among them, that the prophetical books were writings by perſons divinely inſpired; and that the Pentateuch was written by Moſes, the greateſt of all the prophets; and that the hiſtorical writings were either the very original authentic records, or faithfully compiled out of them; and were received and acknowledged by the whole nation, as containing true and juſt accounts of facts. And whereas he urgeth, that it is matter of controverſy, who were the authors of thoſe ſcriptures, or, when they were compoſed or publiſhed; it is certain, that, with reſpect to the much greater part of the ſacred books, both Jews and Chriſtians are generally agreed who were the authors of them.

This is true concerning all the writings of the prophets, the books of Solomon, moſt of the Pſalms, the *five books* of Moſes, which have been conſtantly received by the Jewiſh and Chriſtian church, in all ages, as written by Moſes; though a few in theſe latter times have attempted to conteſt it. The books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel, ſeem plainly to ſhew their authors: and concerning all theſe, there has been a general agreement. The books therefore, concerning the authors of which there is properly any ground of controverſy, are the hiſtorical books of Joſhua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles. As to the firſt of theſe, viz. the book of Joſhua, the ancient Jews in general, and the greater part of Chriſtian writers, with good reaſon look upon it to have been written by Joſhua himſelf; though there are ſome particular paſſages in it that were inſerted afterwards, by way of illuſtration. It is principally concerning the books of Judges, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, that there is any colourable pretence for ſaying with our author, that they were "abridgments of old records made in latter times*." Some of

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 96.

them

them ſeem plainly to have been compiled after the return from the Babyloniſh captivity, probably by Ezra, from ancient authentic records, which are frequently quoted and referred to in them, as books of acknowledged credit and authority; ſo that there is little room to doubt of the truth and certainty of the accounts there given. For that they were faithfully extracted from thoſe original records, to which they refer for a larger account of the things there related, there is the higheſt reaſon to believe. And it was wiſely ordered, that theſe ſhorter accounts ſhould be inſerted in the ſacred canon, when it was to be brought, as it were, into one volume, for the laſting inſtruction and edification of the church. For as the ſacred hiſtory was intended not merely to gratify curioſity, but to promote the purpoſes of religion, piety, and virtue, and to keep up the remembrance of the remarkable actings of divine providence towards them, both in a way of mercy and judgment, according to their behaviour, it was proper that it ſhould be brought into as narrow a compaſs as was conſiſtent with that deſign. This would make it more generally known and eaſily remembered; whereas larger and more particular accounts might have been too voluminous for a book deſigned for univerſal uſe.

The only thing that yet remaineth to be conſidered, with regard to the ſacred books of the Old Teſtament, is, what he ſaith concerning the *curſe* pronounced upon Canaan by Noah: of which we have an account, Gen. ix. 24, 25, 26, 27. This he ſeems to have fixed upon as one of the propereſt inſtances he could find to expoſe the authority of the ſcripture. He treateth it as an invention of the writer to juſtify the Iſraelites in their invaſion of the Canaanites, and repreſenteth this curſe as *contradicting all our notions of order and juſtice.* "One is tempted to "think," ſays he, "that the patriarch was ſtill drunk, and that no "man in his ſenſes could hold ſuch language, or paſs ſuch a ſen-"tence. Certain it is, that no writer but a Jew could impute "to the œconomy of Providence the accompliſhment of ſuch a "prediction, nor make the Supreme Being the executor of ſuch "a curſe."

His Lordſhip obſerves, that "Ham alone offended: Canaan "was innocent—Canaan was however alone curſed, and became, "according to his grandfather's prophecy, a *ſervant of ſervants*, "*i. e.* the

" *i. e.* the vileſt and meaneſt of ſlaves—to Sem, not to Japhet, " when the Iſraelites conquered Paleſtine; to one of his uncles, " not to his brethren. Will it be ſaid—it has been ſaid—that " where we read *Canaan* we are to underſtand *Ham*, whoſe " brethren Sem and Japhet were? At this rate, we ſhall never " know what we read: as theſe critics never care what they ſay. " Will it be ſaid—this has been ſaid too—that Ham was puniſhed " in his poſterity, when Canaan was curſed, and his deſcendants " were exterminated? But who does not ſee, that the curſe and " puniſhment in this caſe fell on Canaan and his poſterity, exclu- " ſive of the reſt of the poſterity of Ham: and were therefore " the curſe and puniſhment of the ſon, not of the father properly? " The deſcendants of Miſraim, another of his ſons, were the " Egyptians: and they were ſo far from being ſervants of ſervants " to their couſins the Semites, that theſe were ſervants of ſer- " vants unto them, during more than fourſcore years. Why " the poſterity of Canaan was to be deemed an accurſed race, " it is eaſy to account: and I have mentioned it juſt now: but it " is not ſo eaſy to account why the poſterity of the righteous Sem, " that great example of filial reverence, became ſlaves to another " branch of the family of Ham*."

Before I proceed to a diſtinct conſideration of what Lord Bolingbroke hath offered, it will be proper to lay before the reader the ſacred text, as it is in our tranſlation, Gen. ix. 21—27. *Noah—was uncovered within his tent: and Ham, the father of Canaan, ſaw the nakedneſs of his father, and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their ſhoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedneſs of their father; and their faces were backward, and they ſaw not their father's nakedneſs. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger ſon had done unto him. And he ſaid, Curſed be Canaan; a ſervant of ſervants ſhall he be unto his brethren. And he ſaid, Bleſſed be the Lord God of Shem, and Canaan ſhall be his ſervant. God ſhall enlarge Japheth, and he ſhall dwell in the tents of Shem: And Canaan ſhall be his ſervant.*

It is acknowledged, that there is a conſiderable difficulty in this paſſage. And if we were not able to account for it at all

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 110, 111, 112.

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at this diſtance, it would be much more reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that ſome circumſtances have been paſſed by in this ſhort narrative, which, if known, would help to clear it; or that there may have been ſome defects in the copies, not now to be remedied; than, upon the account of one difficult and obſcure paſſage, to throw off all regard to writings, which have the moſt juſt pretenſions both to the greateſt antiquity and moſt venerable authority.

But that the difficulties which his Lordſhip hath urged are far from being unanſwerable, will appear from the following obſervations.

Firſt, The foundation of the whole charge, and that upon which the greateſt ſtreſs is laid, is this, that "Ham alone offended: "Canaan was innocent. Canaan however was alone curſed: "and he became, according to his grandfather's prophecy, a "ſervant of ſervants, *i. e.* the vileſt and worſt of ſlaves." Some learned perſons have ſuppoſed, that where the curſe is pronounced upon Canaan, ver. 25. the word ABI, *father*, is to be underſtood, which is expreſsly mentioned, ver. 22.; and that inſtead of *Curſed be Canaan*, it ſhould be read, *Curſed be Ham, the father of Canaan*. And though Lord Bolingbroke ſpeaks of this with great contempt, there are inſtances of ſuch elipſes or omiſſions to be found in ſome other paſſages of Scripture. A remarkable one of this kind is in 2 Sam. xxi. 19. where our tranſlation has it, that *Elhanan —— ſlew the brother of Goliah the Gittite, the ſtaff of whoſe ſpear was like a weaver's beam:* which is certainly right, as appears from the nature of the thing, and from a parallel paſſage, 1 Chron. xx. 5. where he is expreſsly called *the brother of Goliah the Gittite, &c.* But the word *brother* is not in our preſent copies of the original, in 2 Sam. xxi. 19. where it runs thus, *Elhanan —— ſlew Goliah the Gittite, &c.* inſtead of *the brother of Goliah the Gittite*. In like manner the word *father* may be ſupplied here, as well as the word *brother* in the place now mentioned; ſo that for *Curſed be Canaan*, it may be read, *Curſed be Ham, the father of Canaan*. So the Arabic reads it, and ſo Vatablus renders it. And it is followed by other learned writers, particularly by the Biſhop of Clogher, in his *Vindication of the Hiſtories of the Old and New Teſtament*. But if that be not admitted, as not only the Hebrew, but the Samaritan,

ritan, the Septuagint, and all the ancient verſions, except the Arabic, which is of no great authority, read as we do*, this will not prove, either that Canaan was entirely innocent, or that he alone was curſed. The Jews are generally of opinion, in which they follow a very ancient tradition, that Canaan was the firſt that ſaw Noah's nakedneſs, and made a jeſt of it to his father, Ham; who, inſtead of reproving him, went himſelf to ſee it, and in a mocking way told it to his brothers, Shem and Japheth. Lord Bolingbroke makes mention of this, and endeavoureth to obviate it by obſerving, that "the Hebrew and other doctors, "who would make the ſon an accomplice with his father, affirm "not only without, but againſt the expreſs authority of the "text." This is confidently ſaid. But if the text doth not expreſsly mention Canaan as an accomplice, neither can it be ſaid,

* It may be juſtly laid down as a rule, not to be lightly departed from, that where the Hebrew and Samaritan, and beſt ancient verſions, agree in any reading, that reading is not to be altered or given up without neceſſity; and I cannot ſee any neceſſity in the preſent caſe. There are few readings that have a more general conſent in their favour, than that which our tranſlators have followed in the paſſage before us. Not only the Hebrew and Samaritan, but the Septuagint, in thoſe copies that are of the greateſt authority, particularly in the Roman and Alexandrian, to which may be added the Complutenſian, and many others, and the remains of Origen's Hexapla, collected by Montfaucon, the Targums, both of Onkelos and Ben Uzziel, the Syriac, the vulgar Latin, agree in it. There are indeed ſome copies of the Septuagint which read *Ham* inſtead of *Canaan*: and ſo it was in the firſt Venetian edition; but it appears to me, that both in thoſe copies of the Septuagint, and in the Arabic, this reading is rather an interpolation, inſerted for avoiding the difficulty, than to have been a verſion taken from the original. And it may more eaſily be accounted for, why Ham's name ſhould be afterwards inſerted in the text, than why it ſhould have been dropped or omitted, ſuppoſing it to have been expreſsly mentioned in the original. Nor is it likely that that omiſſion ſhould have been repeated three times together in the compaſs of three or four lines.

If the preſent reading be at all altered, that reading which puts the leaſt force upon the text is, that which inſtead of *Canaan* ſubſtitutes *Ham, the father of Canaan*. But it does not ſeem to me very likely, that Ham ſhould be ſo often over deſcribed under the character of the *father of Canaan* in ſo ſhort a prediction. At leaſt it does not ſeem to me probable, that Noah himſelf, in pronouncing it, ſhould three times over characterize Ham as the *father of Canaan*. Let any man read over the prediction with this addition ſo often repeated, and ſee if it has not an odd appearance. If it be ſaid, that it was

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ſaid, that the authority of the text is expreſsly againſt that notion. On the contrary, whoſoever impartially examineth the ſtory as there related, will be naturally led to believe, that Canaan was in ſome degree acceſſary to his father's crime. Ham is in this ſtory particularly characterized as the *father of Canaan*, and Canaan's being ſo often mentioned affordeth a plain intimation, that he was ſome way or other concerned, and might either be the firſt that ſaw his grandfather's nakedneſs, and acquainted his father with it, or might be with his father when he ſaw it, and joined with him in making a mock of it. But as Ham was Canaan's father, from whom better might have been expected, conſidering his age, and the dutiful regard he owed to his father, Noah, with whom he had been ſaved from the deluge, he alone is expreſsly mentioned in this ſhort narration; though the curſe pronounced upon Canaan leads us to think, that he was ſome way partaker of his father's crime. And ſuppoſing this to be ſo,

Moſes himſelf, who, in repeating Noah's malediction againſt Ham, added this of his being the *father of Canaan*, to put the Iſraelites in mind that Canaan was the offspring of accurſed Ham; even in this view the ſo frequent repetition ſeems to be needleſs. The ſacred hiſtorian had in the 18th verſe of this chapter obſerved, that Ham was the *father of Canaan*; and again, in the 22d verſe, in entering upon this narration, he had characteriſed Ham as the *father of Canaan*. The mention of this was certainly very proper in the beginning of the account, on ſuppoſition that Canaan was concerned with his father Ham in that affair, and alſo to prepare the reader for the diſtinct mention of Canaan, in the prediction which was pronounced upon occaſion of Ham's wickedneſs. But this being done, it does not ſeem likely that Moſes ſhould think it neceſſary, in recounting that ſhort prediction, to repeat it ſo often over, that Ham was the *father of Canaan*.

Beſides, it ſeems to me to be of ſome weight, that if that be admitted to be the original reading, Canaan is not directly pointed out in the prediction at all. The being the *ſervant of ſervants*, and *ſervant* both to Shem and Japheth, is not in that caſe ſaid of Canaan, but of Ham. At the moſt it is only inſinuated, by calling Ham *the father of Canaan*, that Canaan might be involved in the curſe, as one of Ham's ſons; but it is not expreſsly applied to him. Whereas in the common reading it contains a manifeſt prediction of the curſe and ſervitude as relating to Canaan. And this was a very good reaſon for Moſes' taking care to record it. It is not improbable, that Noah might have ſaid more on that occaſion than is mentioned; but Moſes contented himſelf with recording that part of the prediction or prophetic curſe which related to Canaan; as it was that which more immediately anſwered his deſign, and which it moſt nearly concerned the Iſraelites to know.

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and that he was Ham's favourite ſon, and like him in his diſpoſitions, the curſe pronounced upon him was really intended againſt both. If we met with the ſame account in any wiſe and credible hiſtorian, this is the conſtruction we ſhould have been apt to put upon it, that both Canaan and his father were concerned in the affair. And it is no very unuſual thing in Scripture, and in other hiſtories too, to omit ſome circumſtances in a ſhort narration, which are plainly implied, and which the reader is left to collect. Indeed, if what ſome expoſitors ſuppoſe be admitted, it is not only implied in the text that Canaan was an accomplice, but is expreſsly ſignified in thoſe words, ver. 24. that *Noah knew what his younger ſon had done unto him.* Where by *younger ſon*, they underſtand his grandſon; for a grandſon, according to the Hebrew idiom, may be properly called a ſon; and they think Ham was not the youngeſt of Noah's ſons, but the middleмoſt, according to the order in which he is always placed, Shem, Ham, and Japheth: ſo Theodoret and Druſius, after ſome of the Hebrew writers, with whom agrees biſhop Patrick. But whatever becomes of this conjecture, and though we ſhould ſuppoſe Ham to be here intended by *the younger ſon*, (which he might really be, though mentioned between Shem and Japheth, ſince the order of their birth and age is not deſigned to be ſignified by it; for Japheth was the eldeſt, Gen. x. 21.), yet ſtill the ſtrain of the ſtory ſeems to imply, that Canaan had a guilty part in it, who alone of all Ham's ſons is expreſsly mentioned upon this occaſion.

But ſecondly, let us ſuppoſe that Canaan was innocent, and no way acceſſary to this particular inſtance of Ham's impiety and wickedneſs, the prophetic curſe and prediction may notwithſtanding this be fairly accounted for. It muſt be ſaid in that caſe, that the curſe was not properly pronounced upon Canaan for Ham's crime, but that, upon occaſion of Ham's wickedneſs, Noah foretold the miſeries and calamities that ſhould befall his poſterity, and particularly his deſcendants by Canaan. And ſuppoſing Noah to have been then enabled by a prophetic ſpirit to foreſee, that from Ham would proceed a profligate and impious race, like him in wickedneſs, and whoſe crimes would at length bring down the vengeance of heaven upon them, and ſubject them to the baſeſt ſervitude and puniſhment, his mentioning it

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on this occaſion, and pointing to that branch of his poſterity on whom this curſe ſhould particularly fall, had a manifeſt propriety in it. This could not but greatly humble Ham, and had a tendency to cauſe him to reflect on his own wickedneſs, and affect him with ſorrow and remorſe on the account of it, if any thing could do it. For who that has the bowels of the human nature, would not be greatly affected at the thought, that his poſterity ſhould be infamous and abandoned, and among the moſt wretched of the human race? And though Canaan alone be mentioned in this ſhort account, it doth not follow that no other of Ham's poſterity fell under the curſe. Noah might have named others of Ham's ſons or deſcendants, though Moſes only takes notice of what related to Canaan, becauſe this was what more eſpecially concerned the people of Iſrael to know.

This leads me to obſerve,

Thirdly, That as to the inſinuation that this prophecy or prediction was feigned *to juſtify the cruelties exerciſed by Joſhua upon the Canaanites* *, it is the author's own groundleſs ſuſpicion, without producing any proof of it. Suppoſing it to have been a real prophecy originally delivered by Noah, the tradition of which had been preſerved in the family of Shem, and which was tranſmitted by Abraham, who might have had it from Shem himſelf, to his deſcendants, it is eaſily accounted for that Moſes ſhould take care to commit it to writing. Nor will it be denied, that one end he might have in view in recording it, was to encourage and animate the Iſraelites, as he knew the time was at hand for the accompliſhment of that prediction, and that the Iſraelites were to be the inſtruments of it. Such a true prophecy, known to have proceeded originally from Noah, was much more likely to anſwer Moſes's end, than if it had been a mere fiction of his own, which had never been heard of before. And that Moſes did not feign this prophecy may be juſtly concluded, becauſe, if it had been invented by himſelf purely to bring an odium upon Canaan and his deſcendants, the ſtory would probably have been contrived otherwiſe than it is. It

* Lord Bolingbroke, in other parts of his works, frequently inſiſts upon theſe *cruelties*, as a demonſtration that the Moſaic conſtitution could not be of divine original. See this fully examined, *View of the Deiſtical Writers*, vol. ii. p. 136, *et ſeq.*

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would have been pretended, not that Ham, but that Canaan had been guilty of that impiety and irreverence towards Noah, the ſecond father of mankind, and repairer of the world, and who was had in great veneration. Thus would Moſes have laid it, if the whole had been his own fiction. He would not have contented himſelf with leaving the reader to collect from the ſtory that Canaan was ſome way faulty, but would have taken care to have made it more directly anſwer his purpoſe, by expreſsly charging the crime upon Canaan himſelf. But as it was a real prophecy of Noah, Moſes gave it as he had received it, without altering the original ſtory, or adding new circumſtances.

This leads me to a fourth obſervation upon this remarkable paſſage, *viz.*

That if rightly underſtood, inſtead of furniſhing a juſt objection againſt the authority of Scripture, it rather confirmeth it, and ſhould increaſe our veneration for it. For we have here a moſt remarkable prophecy, which extended to events at the diſtance of many ages, and hath been wonderfully fulfilled in all its parts. It is manifeſt, that what is here foretold concerning Canaan, Shem, and Japheth, relateth to them, not merely conſidered in their own perſons, but to their offspring, in whom it was chiefly to receive its accompliſhment: and the bleſſings pronounced by Iſaac upon Jacob and Eſau, and afterwards by Jacob upon his twelve ſons, though applied to them by name, were principally to be underſtood of their deſcendants. Taking it in this view, the prophecy here pronounced by Noah is of a great extent. The bleſſing which ſhould attend Shem is foretold, and it is intimated that God would be in a ſpecial manner his God, and would pour forth ſo many bleſſings upon his poſterity, as would lay a foundation for praiſes and thankſgivings; ſo that whoſoever obſerved it, ſhould have reaſon to ſay, *Bleſſed be the Lord God of Shem.* And this was ſignally fulfilled; ſince among his poſterity the knowledge and worſhip of the true God was preſerved, when the reſt of the world was deeply immerſed in idolatry; and from his ſeed the great Meſſiah ſprung. It was alſo foretold, that *God ſhould enlarge Japheth:* and accordingly his poſterity wonderfully increaſed, and ſpread through a great part of the world. Bochart and others have obſerved, that not only all Europe, but the Leſſer Aſia, Iberia, Albania, part of Armenia, Media,

Media, and the vaſt regions in the northern parts of Aſia, and probably America, were peopled by his deſcendants. It is alſo foretold that he ſhould *dwell in the tents of Shem;* which was accompliſhed both by his poſterity's poſſeſſing part of the countries in which the Shemites inhabited, and eſpecially by their being admitted to a participation of the ſame ſpiritual privileges, and received into the true church. So that this may be regarded as an illuſtrious prophecy of the converſion of the Gentiles, many ages before it happened. As to that part of Noah's prophecy which relateth to Canaan, this hath alſo received a remarkable completion. Noah was enabled to foretel the curſe and puniſhment which a long time after befell the Canaanites, for their execrable wickedneſs and impurity. For that the true and proper ground of the puniſhment which was inflicted upon them was their own wickedneſs, is evident from many expreſs declarations of Scripture, particularly Levit. xviii. 24, 25. 27, 28. Deut. ix. 5. This wickedneſs of theirs God perfectly foreſaw, and determined, on the account of it, to inflict exemplary puniſhment upon them; though he would not ſuffer the threatened puniſhment and curſe to take place, till their *iniquities were full, i. e.* till they were arrived at the height. And when this was the caſe, it tended to render the puniſhment more remarkable, that it had been foretold ſo long before. And it was wiſely ordered, that this prophecy ſhould be recorded by Moſes, that, when it came to be viſibly accompliſhed in Canaan's poſterity, the hand of Providence in it might be more diſtinctly obſerved. It is far therefore from being true, that Noah pronounced this in a *paſſion or drunken fit*, as his Lordſhip ſeems willing to repreſent it. It was not properly an imprecation, but a prophecy, and it might be fitly rendered, *Curſed ſhall Canaan be.* It was a prediction of what ſhould befall Ham's deſcendants by Canaan, who reſembled Ham, their anceſtor, in wickedneſs and impurity.

Lord Bolingbroke hath ſeveral little cavils, which are deſigned to invalidate the credit of this prophecy. One is, that Canaan was a ſervant of ſervants, not to his *brethren*, as is foretold, ver. 25. but to his *uncles*, viz. *Shem* and *Japheth*. But this objection ſeems to betray an utter ignorance of the Hebrew idiom, according to which the word *brethren* is of a large extent, and

taketh in not only brothers ſtrictly ſo called, but even diſtant relations, of which many inſtances might be given. And it muſt be farther conſidered, that the prophecy was not properly deſigned to ſignify, that Canaan, in perſon, ſhould be ſervant of ſervants to his uncles Shem and Japheth, but that his poſterity ſhould be ſervants to theirs, who might, by reaſon of the original relation between them, be called their *brethren*.

It is farther urged, that Canaan became a *ſervant of ſervants* unto Shem indeed, but not to Japheth, though this is foretold, ver. 27. But this cavil is no better founded than the former. For the Canaanites became ſervants to the poſterity of Japheth as well as of Shem. The moſt powerful and famous of Canaan's deſcendants, the Tyrians and Carthaginians, after having made a great figure in the world, were deſtroyed, or reduced to the moſt miſerable ſervitude; the former by the Greeks under Alexander the Great, the latter by the Romans, both of whom deſcended from Japheth.

Another objection, which he inſinuates, is, that Shem's poſterity were *ſervants of ſervants for above fourſcore years* to the Egyptians, who were the deſcendants of Mizraim, another of Ham's ſons. But there is no pretence for urging this as a breach of the prediction, ſince no expreſs mention is made there of any of Ham's ſons, but Canaan, concerning whom it is foretold, that he ſhould be a ſervant of ſervants unto Shem and Japheth, which was remarkably fulfilled. Or, if we ſuppoſe, as many great divines have done, that the curſe was deſigned to extend to others of Ham's poſterity, as well as the Canaanites, though not particularly mentioned in this ſhort account, becauſe Moſes' deſign led him only to take expreſs notice of that part of the curſe which related to the Canaanites, who were more than ordinarily corrupt, and upon whom the curſe took place in the fulleſt manner; even on this view of it, the prophecy may be fully juſtified. Ham's deſcendants have had a brand upon them, and been generally among the moſt abject and wretched of the human race. It is true, that the Iſraelites, who were a branch of Shem's poſterity, were for a time held in the bittereſt bondage by the Egyptians, who proceeded from Ham. This was permitted for very valuable ends, and ended in a glorious deliverance of the former from the tyranny and oppreſſion of the latter. To which it

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may be added, that notwithſtanding the Egyptians were for a long time a flouriſhing people, and had great power and dominion, yet they alſo became remarkably ſubjected to the poſterity of Shem and Japheth, and ſo have continued for a great number of ages. They have been ſubjected ſucceſſively to the Perſians, Grecians, Romans, Saracens, Mamalukes, Turks, ſo as to verify that remarkable prophecy of Ezekiel, that Egypt ſhould be *the baſeſt of kingdoms*, neither ſhould it *exalt itſelf any more among the nations*, Ezek. xxix. 15.

Thus it appears, that this boaſted objection, upon which ſo mighty a ſtreſs has been laid, as if it were alone ſufficient to overthrow the authority of Holy Writ, turneth out rather to the confirmation of it.

SECTION II.

His Lordſhip's Attempt againſt the Goſpel Hiſtory, and the Divine Authority of the Chriſtian Religion, conſidered.

HAVING examined what the late Lord Bolingbroke hath urged againſt the authority and credibility of the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament, let us next conſider the attempt he makes againſt the authority of the New. He had indeed, whilſt he expreſſed a great contempt of the Jewiſh ſcriptures, affected to ſpeak with a favourable regard to Chriſtianity. But he afterwards throws off the diſguiſe, and makes it plainly appear, that he hath as little veneration and eſteem for the one as for the other. It is no great ſign of his reſpect for Chriſtianity, that at the ſame time that he does all he can to deſtroy the credit of the Jewiſh hiſtory, and to ſhew that it is not at all to be depended upon, he declares—"that the foundation of the Chriſtian "ſyſtem is laid partly in thoſe hiſtories, and in the prophecies "joined to them, or inſerted in them *." But, not content with this general inſinuation, he afterwards proceedeth, in his fifth Letter, to a more direct attack upon the Chriſtian revelation †." He inſiſteth upon it, that the facts, upon which the authority of the Chriſtian religion is founded, have not been proved as all hiſtorical facts, to which credit ſhould be given, ought to be proved. He declares to the noble Lord to whom he writes, "that this is a matter of great moment; and that therefore he "makes no excuſe for the zeal which obliges him to dwell a "little on it ‡." And after having endeavoured to ſhew, that "there remains at this time no ſtandard at all of Chriſtianity," either in the text of Scripture, or in tradition, he argues, that—"by conſequence, either this religion was not originally of di-"vine inſtitution, or elſe God has not provided effectually for "preſerving the genuine purity of it, and the gates of hell have "actually prevailed, in contradict on to his promiſe, againſt the

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 91, 92.

† Ibid. p. 174—185.

‡ Ibid. p. 176.

"Church."

"Church." He muſt be worſe than an atheiſt that affirms the laſt; and therefore the beſt effect of this reaſoning that can be hoped for, is, that men ſhould fall into theiſm, and ſubſcribe to the firſt. And accordingly he roundly declares, that "Chriſtia-"nity may lean on the civil and eccleſiaſtical power, and be "ſupported by the forcible influence of education: but the pro-"per force of religion, that force which ſubdues the mind, "and awes the conſcience by conviction, will be wanting*." He adds, "Since I have ſaid ſo much on the ſubject, in my "zeal for Chriſtianity, I will add this further—The reſurrection "of letters was a fatal period: the Chriſtian ſyſtem has been "attacked, and wounded too, very ſeverely ſince that time †." And again, ſpeaking of thoſe of the clergy who act for ſpiritual, not temporal ends, and are deſirous that men ſhould believe and practiſe the doctrines of Chriſtianity, he ſaith, that "they "will feel and own the weight of the conſiderations he offers; "and will agree, that however the people have been, or may be, "amuſed, yet Chriſtianity has been in decay ever ſince the re-"ſurrection of letters ‡." This is an odd proof of his pretended *zeal for Chriſtianity*, to inſinuate, that all good and honeſt divines will agree with him, that Chriſtianity has been loſing ground ever ſince the revival of learning and knowledge; as if it could not bear the light, and only ſubſiſted by darkneſs and ignorance. It will help farther to ſhew his deſign in this, if we compare it with what he ſaith in his ſixth Letter §; where he mentions the reſurrection of letters, after the art of printing had been invented, as one of the principal cauſes that contributed to the diminution of the papal authority and uſurpations. And he obſerves, that "as ſoon as the means of acquiring and ſpreading infor-"mation grew common, it is no wonder that a ſyſtem was un-"ravelled, which could not have been woven with ſucceſs in "any age, but thoſe of groſs ignorance, and credulous ſuperſti-"tion." We may ſee by this what a compliment he deſigns to Chriſtianity, when he repreſents it as having received a fatal blow at the reſurrection of letters, and as having been in decay ever ſince. He plainly puts it on a level with the papal autho-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 180, 181, 182. † Ibid. p. 182.
‡ Ibid. p. 185. § Ibid. p. 206, 207.

rity and uſurpation, and ſuppoſes the ſame of Chriſtianity that he does of popery, that it was a ſyſtem which could only have been woven in the ages of ignorance and ſuperſtition, which owed its reception and prevalency to times of darkneſs, and has been decaying ever ſince the means of acquiring and ſpreading information grew common.

This may ſuffice to ſhew the reſpect that the writer of theſe Letters bears to Chriſtianity. Before I enter on a diſtinct examination of what he hath offered, I would obſerve, that he endeavoureth to prepare his way by declaiming, for ſeveral pages together, againſt the prieſts, divines, and eccleſiaſtical hiſtorians, on the account of that ſpirit of lying that hath prevailed among them in all ages*. But he himſelf well obſerves and proves, in oppoſition to an hiſtorical Pyrrhoniſm, that though there have been abundance of lies and falſe hiſtory put upon the world, this ought not to diminiſh the credit of the true. And therefore the frauds and falſehoods of many that have profeſſed a zeal for Chriſtianity, ought to be no prejudice againſt the authority of the New Teſtament, or the credibility of the facts on which it is ſupported, provided it can be ſhewn, that theſe facts come to us with a ſufficient degree of evidence to make it reaſonable for us to receive them as true.

If, as he aſſerts, "numberleſs fables have been invented to ſup-"port Judaiſm and Chriſtianity; and for this purpoſe falſe hiſ-"tory as well as falſe miracles have been employed;"——*it is* certain, that no perſons have taken greater pains, or been more ſucceſsful in their attempts to detect and expoſe ſuch frauds and falſe hiſtory, than Chriſtian divines and critics; many of whom have exerciſed themſelves this way with great judgment and impartiality, as being ſenſible that Chriſtianity needeth no ſuch ſupports, and that ſuch frauds diſhonour the cauſe they are intended to ſerve. If we examine the New Teſtament, we ſhall find no encouragement there given to ſuch methods. A remarkable ſimplicity, and impartial regard to truth, every-where appear. And to lie for the glory of God, or to *do evil that good may come of it*, is there moſt expreſsly condemned. It was when men began to fall from the true original ſpirit of Chriſtianity,

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 123, & *ſeq.*

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and, not content with the ſimplicity of religion as Chriſt and his apoſtles left it, attempted to bring in innovations, additions, alterations in the Chriſtian doctrine, and worſhip; it was then that fraud and impoſture, or a fooliſh credulity, began to prevail, and grew more and more, the farther they removed from the firſt and pureſt ages. And it is capable of a clear proof, that it was principally in favour of thoſe corrupt additions and abuſes of Chriſtianity, that falſe hiſtory and falſe miracles have been artfully contrived, and zealouſly propagated. And why ſhould it be turned to the diſadvantage of the goſpel-hiſtory or miracles, that hiſtory has been corrupted and falſified, in favour of doctrines or practices, *e. g.* the *invocation of ſaints*, *purgatory*, the *worſhip of images*, *relics*, &c. which Chriſtianity has not countenanced or authorized? To which it may be added, that it is plainly foretold in the New Teſtament, that there ſhould be a great apoſtacy from the purity of religion, and that the corruption ſhould be introduced, and carried on, by *ſigns and lying wonders*. And if this hath actually been the caſe, inſtead of furniſhing a proper objection againſt true original Chriſtianity, it affordeth a manifeſt proof of the perfect foreknowledge of its divine authority.

He ſeems to lay a great ſtreſs upon it, that "the church has "had this advantage over her adverſaries—that the works of "thoſe who have written againſt her have been deſtroyed; and "whatever ſhe advanceth to juſtify herſelf, and to defame her "adverſaries, is preſerved in her annals and the writings of her "doctors *."—And he takes particular notice "of Gregory the "Great's proclaiming war to all heathen learning, in order to "promote Chriſtian verity †." But it is certain, that the humour of deſtroying the heathen writings never generally obtained in the Chriſtian Church. On the contrary, it was principally owing to Chriſtians that ſo many of thoſe writings have been tranſmitted to us. The Mahometans, and ſome of the barbarous nations, deſtroyed *libraries*, and monuments of learning, wherever they came. But it is a matter of fact not to be conteſted, that great numbers of heathen writings and monuments have been preſerved; by Chriſtians they have been preſerved; and from thence the learned have been able to give an ample account of

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 127, 128. † Ibid. p. 131.

their *religion*, *rites*, *laws*, and *hiſtory*. And this is ſo far from being a diſadvantage to Chriſtianity, that great uſe hath been made of the heathen learning to ſerve and promote the Chriſtian cauſe. The emperor Julian was ſo ſenſible of this, that he formed a deſign of modelling the ſchools, ſo that the Chriſtians ſhould not be acquainted with the heathen writers. As to the books that have been written againſt Chriſtianity *, it is poſſible that the ill-judged zeal of ſome Chriſtians may have occaſioned the loſs of ſome of them: but I am apt to think it was owing in moſt inſtances to the ſame cauſes and accidents, to which we may attribute the loſs of ſo many ancient monuments, and admired writings, not only of the heathens, but of eminent fathers, and ancient writers of the Chriſtian church. Many celebrated apologies for Chriſtianity, and books in defence of religion, have been loſt; when, on the contrary, the works even of Lucretius, a ſyſtem of Epicuriſm, the life of Apollonius Tyaneus, and others of the like ſort, have come down to our times.

Theſe inſinuations do not properly come up to the main point. But in his fifth letter, under pretence of giving advice to divines, and ſhewing that it is incumbent upon them to apply themſelves to the ſtudy of *hiſtory*, he ſets himſelf more directly to attack the authority of the Chriſtian religion, and to ſubvert, as far as in him lieth, the foundations on which the proof of its divine original depends. And the courſe of his reaſoning is plainly this: that Chriſtianity is wholly founded upon facts, and that thoſe facts do not come to us with a ſufficient degree of evidence to be relied on: they have not been proved as matters of fact ought to be proved. He declares, that—" it has been long matter of aſtoniſh-

* The heathen writers againſt Chriſtianity ſeem not to have been much eſteemed among the Pagans themſelves; and this may be one reaſon why they were not very carefully preſerved. There is a remarkable paſſage of Chryſoſtom to this purpoſe, who, in a diſcourſe addreſſed to the heathens, obſerves, That the philoſophers, and famous rhetoricians, who were againſt Chriſtianity, had only rendered themſelves ridiculous: that they had not been able to perſuade any one among ſo many people, either wife or ſimple, man or woman; that the books written by them were had in ſuch contempt, that they diſappeared almoſt as ſoon as they were publiſhed: and that if any of them were preſerved, it was among Chriſtians that one might find them. Chryſ. tom. ii. p. 559. *Edit. Bened.*

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" ment to him, that Chriſtian divines, thoſe of them that can be " called ſo without a ſneer, could take ſo much ſilly pains to " eſtabliſh myſtery on metaphyſics, revelation on philoſophy, " and matters of fact on abſtract reaſoning. A religion founded " on the authority of a divine miſſion, confirmed by prophecies " and miracles, appeals to facts: and the facts muſt be proved, " as all other facts that paſs for authentic, are proved. If they " are thus proved, the religion will prevail without the aſſiſtance " of ſo much profound reaſoning; if they are not thus proved, " the authority of it will ſink in the world, even with this " aſſiſtance*."—He therefore blames the divines for uſing improper proofs in their diſputes with deiſts. He aſks—" What " do they mean to din improper proofs in ears that are open to " proper proofs?"—Thus it is that he characterizes the deiſts; and afterwards deſcribes them as perſons—" of minds can- " did, but not implicit; willing to be informed, but curious " to examine†." But how different is the account he giveth even of the moſt learned Chriſtians! He affirms, that " they " have not been hitherto impartial enough, to take an accurate " examination of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian ſyſtem, or have not " been honeſt enough to communicate it ‡."—This is a very ſevere and confident cenſure. There have been many perſons, not only among divines, but among the laity, of diſtinguiſhed eminence for probity and virtue, as well as for learning and judgment, and who, to ſpeak modeſtly, were in theſe reſpects no way inferior to the late Lord Bolingbroke, that have profeſſed to examine with all the attention they were capable of, and with an earneſt deſire of knowing the truth, the evidences of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian ſyſtem: but becauſe, as the reſult of their inquiries, they were confirmed in the belief of the divine original of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian revelation, therefore in his judgment, not one of them was honeſt or ſagacious enough to make an accurate examination: and I apprehend they have no other way of obtaining the character of ſagacity or impartiality from writers of this caſt, but by renouncing Chriſtianity. If they do this, they ſhall be allowed to be ſagacious and impartial inquirers; but otherwiſe, they muſt be content to have their judgment or ho-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 175. † Ibid. p. 179. ‡ Ibid. p. 181.

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neſty called in queſtion. But if we may judge by the writings of the deiſts that have hitherto appeared, not excepting thoſe of his Lordſhip, they have not given very favourable indications, either of an uncommon ſagacity, or of a candid and impartial inquiry.

He tells the noble Lord to whom he writes,—"You will find "reaſon perhaps to think as I do, that it is high time the clergy "in all Chriſtian communions ſhould join their forces, and "eſtabliſh thoſe hiſtorical facts, which are the foundations of "the whole ſyſtem, on clear and unqueſtionable hiſtorical autho- "rity, ſuch as they require in all caſes of moment from others, "and reject candidly what cannot be thus eſtabliſhed*."

Chriſtian divines have frequently done what his Lordſhip blames them for not doing. The facts on which the Chriſtian ſyſtem is founded, relate principally to what is recorded in the writings of the New Teſtament, concerning the *holy life*, and excellent *character*, of our bleſſed Saviour, his admirable *diſcourſes*, the many illuſtrious *miracles* he performed during the courſe of his perſonal miniſtry in proof of his divine miſſion, his *reſurrection* from the dead, and conſequent *exaltation*, the extraordinary *effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt* upon his diſciples, and the miraculous atteſtations that were given to his apoſtles, and the firſt publiſhers of the Chriſtian revelation. The queſtion is, what reaſon have we to think that thoſe facts were really done? His Lordſhip requires, that theſe facts ſhould be proved, as all other facts that paſs for authentic are proved: and that divines ſhould eſtabliſh the credit of thoſe facts on clear and unqueſtionable hiſtorical authority, ſuch as they require in all caſes of moment from others. The Chriſtian divines are willing to join iſſue on this point. The beſt, the propereſt way of proving the truth of ancient facts is undoubtedly by authentic accounts publiſhed in the age in which the facts were done, and tranſmitted with ſufficient marks of credibility to our own times. And ſeveral things are to be conſidered, in order to our judging whether, and how far, thoſe accounts may be depended on.—If the facts there related were of a public nature, done for the moſt part in *open* view, and for which an appeal is made to numbers of witneſſes:—if the ac-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 183.

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counts of thoſe facts were given by perſons that were perfectly well acquainted with the facts, and who, having had full opportunity to know them, were themſelves abſolutely perſuaded of the truth and reality of thoſe facts: if they appear from their whole character to have been perſons of great probity, and undeſigning ſimplicity, and who could have no worldly intereſt to ſerve by feigning or diſguiſing thoſe facts; and if their prejudices had not any tendency to bias them in favour of thoſe facts, but the contrary: if the writings themſelves have all the characters of genuine ſimplicity, and an impartial regard to truth, that can be reaſonably deſired: and if they can be clearly traced from the age in which they were written, and the facts were ſaid to be done, through the ſucceeding ages, to our own times: and finally, if it is undeniably evident, that there were ſurprizing effects produced in the very age in which the facts were ſaid to be done, and which cannot otherwiſe be accounted for, than by allowing the truth of thoſe facts, and the effects of which continue to this day: where theſe ſeveral circumſtances concur, they lay a juſt foundation for receiving the accounts given of facts as true. According to the juſteſt rules of criticiſm, ſuch accounts of facts may be depended on: and many facts are generally received and believed, that fall greatly ſhort of this evidence.

Now it is capable of being proved, and has been often proved with great clearneſs and ſtrength, that all theſe circumſtances concur in relation to the important facts on which the Chriſtian ſyſtem is founded. The facts themſelves were, for the moſt part, done in open view, and of which there were many witneſſes. Chriſt's whole perſonal miniſtry was a very public thing. The ſcene of it was not laid in a dark obſcure corner, nor was it carried on merely in a private way. His admirable diſcourſes were, for the moſt part, delivered, and his miracles wrought, in places of the moſt public concourſe, before great multitudes of people, and even before his enemies themſelves, and thoſe who were moſt ſtrongly prejudiced againſt him. Many of his wonderful works are repreſented as having been done at Jeruſalem, at the time of their ſolemn feſtivals, when there was a vaſt concourſe of people from all parts. The ſame may be ſaid of the remarkable circumſtances which attended his crucifixion, the earth-

earthquake, the ſplitting of the rock, the extraordinary preternatural darkneſs that covered the whole land for the ſpace of three hours, &c.; which things happened at the time of the Jewiſh paſſover, and could not have been impoſed upon the people of that age, if they had not been known to be inconteſtably true. And the relating ſuch things was, in effect, appealing to thouſands of witneſſes. And though Jeſus did not appear publicly after his reſurrection to all the people; yet, beſides that he ſhewed himſelf alive after his paſſion by many infallible proofs, to his apoſtles and others, who beſt knew him, and were therefore moſt capable of judging that it was he himſelf, and not another; and was ſeen even by five hundred at once, who all concurred in their teſtimony; beſides this, the extraordinary effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt upon his diſciples on the day of Pentecoſt, which was the moſt illuſtrious confirmation of his reſurrection and aſcenſion, is repreſented to have been of the moſt public nature, in the preſence of vaſt multitudes, then gathered together at Jeruſalem from all parts of the world. To which it may be added, that many of the miracles that were wrought in the name, and by the power, of a riſen Jeſus, and which were ſo many additional proofs of his reſurrection, were alſo done in open view, before great numbers of people. The accounts of theſe facts were written and publiſhed in the very age in which the facts were done, and the laws and doctrines delivered, which are there recorded, and by perſons who appear to have been perfectly acquainted with the things they relate, and fully perſuaded of the truth of them. And many of the facts were of ſuch a nature, and ſo circumſtanced, that they could not be deceived in them, allowing them to have had their ſenſes, which I think it is but reaſonable to ſuppoſe.

The writers of theſe accounts appear to have been perſons of plain ſenſe, and of great probity and ſimplicity, and to have had a ſincere regard to truth. They write without art, without paſſion, or any of that heat which enthuſiaſm is wont to inſpire: they take no pains to prepoſſeſs or captivate the reader; but content themſelves with a plain ſimple narration of facts, without ornament, amplification, or diſguiſe: they relate with a calm ſimplicity, and in a manner that hath not the leaſt ſign of an over-heated imagination, Chriſt's wonderful actions, and excellent

lent diſcourſes, without interpoſing any reflections of their own. With the ſame coolneſs they relate the bitter cenſures, the ſcoffs and reproaches, that were caſt upon him by his adverſaries, and the grievous and ignominious ſufferings he endured, without expreſſing their indignation againſt the authors of them. And it is obſervable, that they do not repreſent him, as one might be apt to expect they would have done, as triumphing over thoſe ſufferings with an exulting bravery, but rather as manifeſting great tenderneſs of heart and ſenſibility under them, though mixed with remarkable conſtancy and reſignation.

It is a farther proof of that impartial regard to truth, which is obſervable in the writers of thoſe accounts, that, though ſome of them were apoſtles themſelves, and others their ſpecial friends and intimates, yet they relate, without diſguiſe, things which ſeem to bear hard upon their characters. They relate not only the lowneſs and meanneſs of their condition and circumſtances, but their ignorance, their dullneſs of apprehenſion, the weakneſs of their faith, the power of their prejudices, their vain ambition, and contentions among themſelves who ſhould be the greateſt, the reproofs they received from their Lord, their cowardly forſaking him in his laſt ſufferings, and particularly the ſhameful fall of Peter, one of the chief of them, and his denial of his Lord and maſter, with the aggravating circumſtances that attended it. They have not attempted to conceal any of theſe things, which they might eaſily have done, or to excuſe or diſguiſe them; than which nothing could better ſhew their impartiality, and love of truth.

It farther ſtrengthens the credit of their relations, when it is conſidered, that they had no temptation to diſguiſe or falſify the great facts recorded in the goſpels, in order to ſerve any worldly intereſt, or to humour and confirm any darling prejudices. On the contrary, it appeareth, that they were themſelves brought, by the irreſiſtible evidence of the facts they relate, to embrace a religion, which was not only contrary to their worldly intereſts, and expoſed them to all manner of reproaches, perſecutions, and ſufferings, but which was alſo contrary to their former moſt favourite notions, and rooted prejudices. For what could be more contrary to the notions and prejudices, which then univerſally poſſeſſed the minds of the Jews, both of the learned and of the

the vulgar, than the doctrine of a crucified Meſſiah, who was to erect a kingdom, not of this world, but of a ſpiritual nature, in the benefits and privileges of which the Gentiles were to be joint ſharers with the Jews? And, finally, they gave the higheſt proof of their being themſelves perſuaded of the truth of thoſe facts, by their perſiſting in their teſtimony with an unſhaken conſtancy, in oppoſition to all the powers and terrors of this world. To this it may be added, that the writings themſelves have all the characters of genuine purity, ſimplicity, and uncorrupted integrity, that any writings can have; nor is there any thing in them that gives the leaſt ground of ſuſpicion of their having been written in any later age, or that favours of the ſpirit of this world, of ambition, avarice, or ſenſuality. And theſe writings have been tranſmitted to us with an unqueſtionable evidence, greater than can be produced for any other writings in the world. We can clearly trace them through all the intermediate ages up to that immediately ſucceeding the apoſtles, and have the moſt convincing proof of their having been ſtill extant, and ſtill received and acknowledged among Chriſtians. There are great numbers of books, now in our hands, that were written and publiſhed in the ſeveral ages between that time and this, in which there are continual references to the goſpels, and other ſacred books of the New Teſtament. And by the numerous quotations from them, and large portions tranſcribed out of them in every age, it is inconteſtably manifeſt, that the accounts of the facts, diſcourſes, doctrines, &c. which now appear in them, are the ſame that were to be found in them in the firſt ages. Innumerable copies of them were ſoon ſpread abroad in different nations: they have been tranſlated into various languages: many commentaries have been written upon them by different authors, who have inſerted the ſacred text in their writings: they have been conſtantly applied to on many occaſions, by perſons of different ſects, parties, inclinations, and intereſts. Theſe are things which no man can be ſo hardy as to deny. And by this kind of evidence, the greateſt and the moſt convincing which the nature of the thing can poſſibly admit of, we are aſſured, that the evangelical records, which are now in our hands, have been tranſmitted ſafe to us, and are the ſame that were originally publiſhed in the apoſtolical age; and that a general corruption

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of them, or a ſubſtitution of other accounts inſtead of them, if any had attempted it, would have been an impoſſible thing.

Taking all theſe conſiderations together, it appeareth, that never were there any accounts of facts that better deſerved to be depended on. And what mightily confirmeth the credit of thoſe writings, and of the facts there related, is, that it cannot be conteſted, that great numbers, both of Jews and heathens, upon the credit of thoſe facts, forſaking the religion of their anceſtors, were brought to receive the religion of Jeſus in the firſt age, when they had the beſt opportunity of inquiring into the truth and certainty of thoſe facts: and this in oppoſition to their moſt inveterate prejudices, and when, by embracing it, they expoſed themſelves to all manner of evils and ſufferings. The ſpreading of the Chriſtian religion, as the caſe was circumſtanced, furniſheth a very ſtrong proof of the truth of the facts on which it was founded, and cannot otherwiſe be accounted for.

Our author aſſerts, that "if the facts can be proved, the Chriſtian religion will prevail, without the aſſiſtance of profound reaſoning: but, if the facts cannot be proved, the authority of it will ſink in the world, even with this aſſiſtance*." I think it may be fairly argued from this, that if the extraordinary facts had not been true, on the evidence of which alone Chriſtianity is founded, it muſt have ſunk at the very beginning, and could never have been eſtabliſhed in the world at all; conſidering the nature of this religion, and the difficulties and oppoſitions it had to encounter with. It was manifeſtly contrary to the prevailing prejudices both of Jews and Gentiles: it tended entirely to ſubvert the whole ſyſtem of the pagan ſuperſtition and idolatry, which was wrought into their civil conſtitution, and upon which the proſperity of the Roman empire, and the eſtabliſhment of their ſtate, were thought to depend. It alſo tended to ſet aſide the peculiar polity of the Jews, upon which they ſo highly valued themſelves, and to ſubvert all the pleaſing hopes and expectations of the temporal kingdom of the Meſſiah, with which they were ſo infinitely delighted. It obliged them to receive one that had been ignominiouſly condemned and crucified, as their Redeemer and their Lord, the Son of God, and Saviour of the world.

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 75.

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It propoſed no temporal advantages to its votaries, to bribe men to embrace it; gave no indulgence to their corrupt luſts, nor had any thing in it to ſooth and gratify their vicious appetites and inclinations. At the ſame time it had all the powers of the world engaged againſt it: yet it ſoon triumphed over all oppoſition, though propagated by the ſeemingly meaneſt inſtruments; and made an aſtoniſhing progreſs through a great part of the Roman empire, then the moſt knowing and civilized part of the earth. This is a ſtrong additional confirmation of the truth of thoſe accounts which are contained in the goſpel records; ſince there could not be, as the caſe was circumſtanced, any poſſible inducement to Jews or Gentiles to embrace Chriſtianity, but a thorough conviction of its divine original, and of the truth of thoſe extraordinary facts by which it was atteſted.

And if the firſt propagators of this religion had offered no other proof but their own words in ſupport of it, and in confirmation of the divine authority of a crucified Jeſus, it cannot, with any conſiſtency, be ſuppoſed, that a ſcheme of religion, ſo deſtitute of all worldly advantages, and ſo oppoſite to men's prejudices, as well as vices, and which ſubjected thoſe that made profeſſion of it to ſuch bitter reproaches and perſecutions, could poſſibly have prevailed in the world.

If, at the time when Chriſtianity made its firſt appearance in the world, it had been embraced by the Roman emperor, as it afterwards was by Conſtantine the Great, if it had been countenanced by the higher powers, there might have been ſome pretence for aſcribing the progreſs it made to the encouragement it met with from the great and powerful. The author of theſe Letters, ſpeaking of the miracles ſaid to be wrought at the tomb of the Abbé Paris, obſerves, "That, if the firſt miniſter had "been a Janſeniſt, all France had kept his feſtival; and thoſe "ſilly impoſtures would have been tranſmitted, in all the ſolemn "pomp of hiſtory, from the knaves of his age to the fools of the "next *." But this very inſtance, in which the deiſts have triumphed ſo much, may be turned againſt them, ſince it affordeth a plain proof, how difficult it is to maintain the credit of miraculous facts, when they are diſcountenanced by the civil

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 125, 126.

power.

"power. The miracles ſuppoſed to be wrought at the tomb of the Abbé Paris were quaſhed, and a ſtop put to the courſe of the miraculous operations, and the falſehood of ſome of them plainly detected, notwithſtanding there was a numerous, a powerful, and artful body of men engaged, in reputation and intereſt, to ſupport the credit of them. It may therefore be juſtly concluded, that if the extraordinary facts, on which Chriſtianity was founded, had been falſe, the credit of them muſt ſoon have ſunk, and that religion with it, when all the reigning powers of the world, Jewiſh and heathen, joined their forces and influence to ſuppreſs it*.

In what hath been ſaid above, to ſhew the credit that is due to the accounts given of the facts by which Chriſtianity is eſtabliſhed, it is ſuppoſed, that theſe accounts were written by Chriſt's own diſciples, or their moſt intimate companions, and in the firſt age, the age in which the facts were done, *i. e.* by perſons perfectly well acquainted with thoſe facts. But this is what our author ſeems unwilling to allow. In his fifth Letter, after having obſerved, that—"falſe hiſtory has been employed "to propagate Chriſtianity formerly, and that the ſame abuſe "of hiſtory is ſtill continued"—he inſtances in Mr. Abbadie's ſaying, that—"the goſpel of St. Matthew is cited by Clemens, "biſhop of Rome, a diſciple of the Apoſtles; that Barnabas cites "it in his Epiſtle; that Ignatius and Polycarp receive it; and that "the ſame fathers give teſtimony for St. Mark." He adds, that—"the biſhop of London, in his third Paſtoral Letter, "ſpeaks to the ſame effect." And then he proceeds—"I pre-"ſume the fact advanced by the miniſter and the biſhop, is a "miſtake. If the fathers of the firſt century do mention ſome "paſſages that are agreeable to what we read in our Evangeliſts, "will it follow, that theſe fathers had the ſame goſpels before "them? To ſay ſo, is a manifeſt abuſe of hiſtory, and quite "inexcuſable in writers that knew, or might have known, that "theſe fathers made uſe of other goſpels, wherein ſuch paſſages "might be contained, or they might be preſerved in unwritten "tradition. Beſides which, I would almoſt venture to affirm,

* The difficulties Chriſtianity had to encounter with, are elegantly repreſented by Mr. Weſt, in his admirable Treatiſe on the Reſurrection.

" that the fathers of the firſt century do not expreſsly name the " goſpels we have of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John *." His deſign is plainly to ſignify, that there is no proof, that the Goſpels, the books of the Evangeliſts which we now have in our hands, were written in the firſt age of Chriſtianity.

As this is a matter of importance, I ſhall offer ſome obſervations upon it.

And, firſt, it is to be obſerved, that though but few of the writings of the fathers of the firſt century are come down to us, and thoſe generally very ſhort; yet it cannot be denied, that in all theſe writings the facts recorded in the goſpels, eſpecially relating to our Lord's paſſion and reſurrection, and the ſcheme of religion there taught, are all along ſuppoſed, and referred to, as of undoubted truth and certainty, and of divine original: ſo that thoſe writings of the apoſtolical fathers bear teſtimony materially to the goſpels, and to the facts there related, and come in aid of thoſe accounts. It is alſo manifeſt, that there are ſeveral particular paſſages quoted in theſe writings, which ſeem plainly to refer to paſſages that are now found in the Evangeliſts; and theſe paſſages are mentioned in a manner which ſhews, that they regarded them as of divine authority. Nor is it a valid objection againſt this, that they do not cite the goſpels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, by name: for it is not their cuſtom, in mentioning paſſages of Scripture, to name the particular books out of which theſe paſſages are extracted; they content themſelves with producing the paſſages, or giving the ſenſe of them. This they generally do with regard to teſtimonies produced from the ſacred books of the Old Teſtament: and yet no one will deny, that they had thoſe books in their hands, and acknowledged their divine authority.

Barnabas, in his Epiſtle, has ſome plain references to paſſages that are to be found in St. Matthew's goſpel: and with regard to one of them, he introduced it with ſaying, *It is written;* which was a form of quotation uſual among the Jews in citing their ſacred books, and ſeems plainly to ſhew, that he referred to written accounts of the actions and diſcourſes of our Saviour.

Clement, in his Epiſtle, mentions ſeveral remarkable paſſages

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 177, 178.

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in our Lord's diſcourſes, recorded by the Evangeliſts, Matthew, Mark, and Luke; he calls them, *the words of the Lord Jeſus, which he ſpake*, and repreſents them as of the higheſt authority, and deſerving the greateſt regard.

Ignatius hath ſeveral paſſages, which either are plain references, or manifeſt alluſions, to paſſages that are to be found in St. Matthew's goſpel, and to ſeveral other books of the New Teſtament. He tells thoſe to whom he writes, that they "ought "to hearken to the Prophets, but eſpecially to the goſpel, in "which the paſſion has been manifeſted to us, and the reſurrec- "tion perfected *." Where, as by the Prophets are undoubtedly to be underſtood the prophetical writings, ſo by *the Goſpel* ſeems plainly to be underſtood the writings of the Evangeliſts, collected into one book called the Goſpel. And in other paſſages he ſpeaks to the ſame purpoſe †, and in a manner which ſhews, that this book of the goſpel was of the moſt ſacred authority among Chriſtians.

Polycarp, in his Epiſtle, though very ſhort, hath many paſſages that plainly refer or allude to texts of the New Teſtament; and quoting ſome paſſages which are expreſsly found in the Evangeliſts, he introduces them thus, *The Lord hath ſaid.* He expreſſes his confidence, that the Philippians, to whom he writes, were *well exerciſed in the Holy Scriptures.* And it is manifeſt from what he there adds, that by the Holy Scriptures he particularly intends the ſacred writings of the New Teſtament: which ſhews, that they were had in the greateſt veneration by the Chriſtians of that age.

He that would ſee a more diſtinct account of theſe things, may conſult the learned Dr. Lardner's accurate collection of the paſſages from the apoſtolical fathers, in his *Credibility of the Goſpel-Hiſtory*, part ii. vol. i.

It appeareth from this brief account, that the apoſtolical fathers have taken as much notice of the evangelical writings, as could be reaſonably expected, or as they had occaſion to do. And therefore I ſee not why Mr. Abbadie ſhould be charged with an abuſe of hiſtory, for repreſenting the fathers of the firſt cen-

* Ep. ad Smyrn. S. 7.

† Ep. ad Philadelph. S. 5, & 9.

tury as having cited the books of the Evangeliſts; ſince though they do not expreſsly quote them by name, yet they quote paſſages as of ſacred authority, which are to be found in theſe books: and therefore it may be reaſonably ſuppoſed, that they refer to thoſe books, which, as I ſhall preſently ſhew, were then extant, and the authority of which was then acknowledged.

But it is urged, that if the fathers of the firſt century do mention ſome paſſages that are agreeable to what we read in our Evangeliſts, it does not follow, that they had the ſame goſpels before them; becauſe "thoſe fathers made uſe of other goſpels, "wherein ſuch paſſages might be contained, or they might be "preſerved in unwritten tradition." But this way of ſtating the caſe does not afford the leaſt preſumption, that the books of our Evangeliſts were not then extant. It is only ſuppoſed, that there might be other accounts in that age, in which the ſame things might be contained; and that the actions and diſcourſes of our Lord were well known among the Chriſtians of the firſt age, both by written accounts, and by tradition received from the preaching of the Apoſtles. And this certainly confirmeth, inſtead of invalidating, the accounts given in the goſpels, and ſuppoſeth the facts there recorded to have been of well-known credit and authority. But he ought not to mention it as a thing that is and muſt be acknowledged by all the learned, that thoſe fathers of the firſt century made uſe of other goſpels beſides thoſe of the Evangeliſts. It cannot be proved, that they ever refer to any other goſpels. The only paſſage in all the apoſtolical fathers, which ſeems to look that way, is one in Ignatius, which ſome ſuppoſe was taken out of the goſpel of the Hebrews, which itſelf was really St. Matthew's goſpel, with ſome interpolations and additions; and yet that paſſage may be fairly interpreted, as referring to the words of our Saviour, recorded by St. Luke, chap. xxiv. 39 *.

It may be gathered indeed from the introduction of St. Luke's goſpel, that many in that firſt age had undertaken to write an account of the hiſtory of our Saviour's life, miracles, diſcourſes, &c. but it does not appear, that thoſe writings were generally re-

* See *Lardner's Credibility*, &c. part ii. vol i. p. 184, 185, 186.

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ceived among Chriſtians as authentic; probably becauſe they were not done with ſufficient exactneſs, and had a mixture of things falſe or uncertain. And therefore it is not likely, that the paſſages referred to by the fathers of the firſt century, were taken from thoſe writings: it is far more probable, that they were taken from the books of the Evangeliſts, where we ſtill find them, and which were then extant, and their authority acknowledged among Chriſtians.

That the goſpels which we have now in our hands were undoubtedly extant in the apoſtolical age, and regarded as authentic, admitteth of a clear proof, if it be conſidered, that in the age immediately ſucceeding we find them univerſally received and acknowledged in the Chriſtian church. There are ſeveral books come down to our times, which were written by authors who unqueſtionably lived in the ſecond century, in which theſe goſpels are frequently and by name referred to as of divine authority, and many expreſs quotations drawn from them; by which it is manifeſt, that they were then received with great veneration in the Chriſtian churches. And it appeareth from the firſt Apology of Juſtin Martyr, publiſhed about an hundred years after the death of our Saviour, that it was then the ordinary practice to read the *memoirs of the Apoſtles*, and the *writings of the Prophets*, in the religious aſſemblies of Chriſtians. And that by the *memoirs of the Apoſtles* he means the books of the Evangeliſts, is evident from ſeveral paſſages in his writings; and particularly from a paſſage in this very Apology, where, having mentioned the *memoirs compoſed by the Apoſtles*, he adds, *which are called Goſpels:* and there are frequent citations from all of them in his writings; which plainly ſhew, that he looked upon thoſe books as authentic hiſtories of Jeſus Chriſt. The ſame may be obſerved concerning other writers in that century. And ſince it is manifeſt, that the four goſpels were generally received, and had in the higheſt eſteem and veneration, among Chriſtians in the ſecond century, even in the former part of it (for that Apology was written about the year 139 or 140), this plainly ſheweth, that the goſpels muſt have been written and publiſhed in the apoſtolical age itſelf. And it was, becauſe they were known to have been written by the Apoſtles, or their companions and intimates; and that the accounts there

given were authentic, and abſolutely to be depended upon; that theſe writings were ſo early and generally received. Euſebius, ſpeaking of Quadratus, and other eminent perſons, who "held the "firſt rank in the ſucceſſion of the Apoſtles," informs us, "that "they travelled abroad, performed the work of Evangeliſts, "being ambitious to preach Chriſt, and deliver the Scripture "of the divine Goſpels*." The perſons he ſpeaketh of flouriſhed in the reign of Trajan, in the beginning of the ſecond century, and had undoubtedly lived a good part of their time in the firſt: and their carrying the books of the goſpels with them where they preached, and delivering them to their converts, ſheweth that thoſe goſpels were then well known to be genuine, and had in great eſteem. And indeed if they had not been written in the apoſtolical age, and then known to be genuine, it cannot be conceived, that ſo ſoon after, even in the next age, they could have been ſo generally diſperſed, and ſtatedly read in the Chriſtian aſſemblies, and regarded as of equal authority with the writings of the ancient prophets, which had been for ſome ages read in the ſynagogues on the Sabbath-days. And though a great clamour hath been raiſed concerning ſome ſpurious goſpels which appeared in the primitive times, there is nothing capable of a clearer proof, than that the four goſpels, and thoſe only, were generally received as of divine authority in the Chriſtian church, in the ages neareſt the Apoſtles; and have continued ſo ever ſince, and have been all along regarded with the profoundeſt veneration.

To this ought to be added, that the heathen writers, who lived neareſt thoſe times, never pretended to deny, that the books of the Evangeliſts received among Chriſtians were written by Chriſt's own diſciples. Celſus lived in the ſecond century. He ſpeaks of Jeſus, the author of the Chriſtian religion, as having lived πρὸ πάνυ ὀλίγων ἐτῶν, *a very few years before*. He mentions many things recorded in our Evangeliſts, relating to the *birth*, *life*, *miracles*, *ſufferings*, and *reſurrection*, of Jeſus Chriſt; and tells the Chriſtians—"Theſe things we have pro-"duced out of your own writings." He all along ſuppoſeth them to have been written by Chriſt's own diſciples, that lived and converſed with him, though he does all he can to ridicule and

* *Euſeb. Eccleſ. Hiſt.* lib. iii. cap. 37.

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expoſe them*. To this it may be added, that the Emperor Julian, who flouriſhed about the middle of the fourth century, and who was both of great acuteneſs, and very well diſpoſed to take all advantages againſt Chriſtianity, and had, no doubt, an opportunity of reading whatſoever books had been written againſt the Chriſtians before his time, never pretends to conteſt the goſpels being written by Chriſt's own diſciples, and thoſe whoſe names they bear, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; whom he expreſsly mentions as the writers of thoſe books †; though, no doubt, he would have been very well pleaſed, if he could have met with any proof or preſumption that could make it probable, that the books of the Evangeliſts, ſo generally received among Chriſtians, were written, not by Chriſt's own immediate diſciples, or their companions, or in the apoſtolical age, but were compiled afterwards, and falſely aſcribed to the Apoſtles. To which it may be added, that none of the Jews, in any of their writings againſt Chriſtianity, though they often mention the books of the Evangeliſts, have ever pretended, that thoſe books were not written by thoſe to whom they are attributed, but by others, in after-times, under their names: nor do they ever mention any charge or ſuſpicion of this kind, as having been brought againſt thoſe books by their anceſtors.

Thus we find, by the acknowledgment of friends and enemies, who lived neareſt to thoſe times, that the accounts contained in the books of the Evangeliſts were written in the apoſtolical age; the age in which thoſe facts are ſaid to have been done, which are there recorded. There are plain references to them, and paſſages produced out of them, in the few writings that remain of the firſt century. And in the age immediately ſucceeding, we have full proof, that they were univerſally received in the Chriſtian church as of divine authority, and read as ſuch in the Chriſtian aſſemblies, and were aſcribed to Chriſt's own immediate attendants, or their intimate companions, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, by name. This hath been univerſally admitted ever ſince in all ages; and theſe books have been tranſmitted down to our times with ſuch an uninterrupted and con-

* *Orig. contra Celſ.* lib. ii. p. 67. 69, 70.

† *Cyril Alex. contra Julian.* lib. x. p. 327. *Edit. Spanheim.*

tinued evidence, as cannot be produced for any other books whatſoever. He would be accounted a very unreaſonable man, that ſhould deny, or even queſtion it, whether the books of Livy, Salluſt, Tacitus, were written by thoſe whoſe names they bear. But the deiſts, and his Lordſhip among the reſt, moſt unreaſonably reject that hiſtorical teſtimony and evidence in behalf of the ſcriptures, which they would account to be ſufficient with regard to any other books in the world.

It gives a mighty force to all this, that, upon a careful examining and conſidering the books themſelves, they bear the plain marks and characters of the firſt, the apoſtolical age, and not one mark of a later date. Though three of the Evangeliſts make particular mention of our Saviour's predictions concerning the deſtruction of Jeruſalem and the temple, yet there is not any intimation given, in any one book of the New Teſtament, of that deſtruction as having been actually accompliſhed, which yet was in forty years after our Lord's crucifixion. And it could ſcarce have been avoided, but that ſome or other of them muſt have taken notice of it, conſidering the many occaſions there were for mentioning it, if theſe books had been generally written after that event. It appeareth, from the beginning of St. Luke's goſpel, compared with the introduction to the Acts of the Apoſtles, that he wrote his goſpel before he wrote the Acts. And yet this latter was evidently written in the apoſtolical age, and ſometime before the death of St. Paul. For it is plain, from the accounts given in that book, that the writer of it was a companion of St. Paul in his labours and travels, and particularly was with him in his voyage to Rome; with an account of which, and of his preaching there two years in his own hired houſe, the book ends. It taketh no notice of his after-labours and travels, and of his martyrdom at Rome; which it would undoubtedly have done, as well as of the martyrdom of St. James, if it had been written after thoſe events happened. And it is a great proof of the high veneration the firſt Chriſtians had for thoſe writings, and how careful they were not to inſert any accounts into them which were not originally there, that none of them ever pretended to make ſupplemental additions to that book, either with regard to St. Paul himſelf, or any other of the apoſtles. And as we may juſtly conclude, that St. Luke's goſpel was publiſhed in

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the apoſtolical age itſelf, whilſt many of the apoſtles were yet living, ſo it hath been generally agreed, that St. Matthew's goſpel was publiſhed before that of St. Luke; and that the goſpel of St. John was written laſt of all. And yet this laſt, as is manifeſt from the book itſelf, was written by one of Chriſt's own diſciples, *the diſciple whom Jeſus loved.* And it appeareth to have been principally deſigned to record ſeveral things, which were not diſtinctly taken notice of by the other evangelical writers. Accordingly we find, that though the facts are there plainly ſuppoſed, which are related by the other Evangeliſts, yet thoſe miracles and diſcourſes of our Lord are chiefly inſiſted upon, which either were omitted by them, or but ſlightly mentioned. Indeed whoſoever impartially conſidereth the writings of the New Teſtament, will eaſily obſerve in them many peculiar characters, which plainly point to the time in which they were written. And there is all the reaſon in the world to think, that if theſe books had been written in any ſucceeding age, they would have been in ſeveral reſpects different from what they now are. The Chriſtian religion here appeareth in its primitive ſimplicity, without any of the mixtures of following ages. The idea that is given of the Chriſtian church, in the writings of the New Teſtament, is ſuch as is proper to the firſt age, and from which there were ſome variations, even in that which immediately followed. The diſcourſes of our bleſſed Lord, as recorded by the Evangeliſts, are of ſuch a nature, ſo full of divine wiſdom, and admirable ſentiments, as would manifeſtly appear, if there were room in this place to enter on a particular conſideration of them: they are delivered with ſo much gravity and authority, and yet, for the moſt part, in ſuch a particular way, that they carry the evident proofs of their own genuineneſs. The character given of our Saviour, in the books of the Evangeliſts, ſeems plainly to have been drawn from the life. And it may be juſtly affirmed, that it was not in the power of ſuch writers, deſtitute, as they appear to be, of all art and ornament, to have feigned ſuch a character: a character, in which is wonderfully united, a divine dignity becoming the Son of God, and an amiable humility and condeſcenſion becoming the Saviour of men; an admirable wiſdom, in conjunction with the greateſt candour and ſimplicity of heart; an ardent zeal for the glory of God, and the moſt extenſive charity and benevolence towards mankind;

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an impartial freedom and ſeverity in reproving faults, and great tenderneſs in bearing with men's weakneſſes and infirmities; an unparallelled purity and ſanctity of manners, without any thing ſour or unſociable, or a ſupercilious contempt of others; the moſt exemplary patience and fortitude under the greateſt ſufferings, joined with a remarkable tenderneſs and ſenſibility of ſpirit. To this may be added, the beauty of his maxims, the ſolidity of his reflections, the juſt and ſublime notions of religion which he every-where inculcateth, far ſuperior to any thing that was taught by the moſt celebrated doctors of the Jewiſh nation. The morals he is repreſented as having taught are the moſt pure and refined, and yet without running into any ſuperſtitious extremes, ſuch as were the affected ſtrictneſſes of the Phariſees and Eſſenes, or the falſe refinements of ſome Chriſtians in the following ages. The motives there propoſed are the moſt powerful and efficacious that can be preſented to the human mind, drawn from all the charms of the divine love and goodneſs; from the engaging offers of grace and mercy made to the truly penitent, which yet are ſo ordered as not to give the leaſt encouragement to the obſtinately wicked and diſobedient; from the promiſes of divine aids to aſſiſt our ſincere endeavours in the performance of our duty; from the important ſolemnities of the future judgment, and the eternal retributions of the world to come; the inexpreſſible glory and felicity prepared for good men, and the dreadful puniſhments that ſhall be inflicted upon the wicked. In a word, ſo perfect is the idea of religion contained in thoſe writings, that all attempts to add to it in ſucceeding ages, or raiſe it to an higher degree of perfection, have really fallen ſhort of its original excellence, and tended to tarniſh its primitive beauty and glory.

Taking all theſe conſiderations together, they form a very ſtrong and convincing proof of the truth and authenticity of the goſpel-records; and that, whether we conſider the method of conveyance, whereby they have been tranſmitted to us, and which we can trace up with a continued evidence to the firſt age, or the internal characters of original truth and purity, and genuine integrity, which appear in the writings themſelves.

To take off the force of the evidence brought for the facts on which Chriſtianity is eſtabliſhed, it hath been urged, that theſe facts are only atteſted by Chriſtians. The author of theſe Let-

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ters obſerves, that the church has this advantage over her adverſaries, that the books that were written againſt her have been deſtroyed, whilſt whatever tends to juſtify her has been preſerved in her annals: And that "he muſt be very implicit indeed, who "receives for true the hiſtory of any nation or religion, and "much more that of any ſect or party, without having the means "of confronting it with ſome other hiſtory*." He here ſeems to ſuppoſe it as a thing certain, that there had been hiſtorical evidence againſt Chriſtianity, but that the church had ſuppreſſed it†. But this is a precarious ſuppoſition, without any thing to ſupport it. The account of the facts on which Chriſtianity is founded, was publiſhed, as hath been ſhewn, by perſons who pretended to be perfectly well acquainted with thoſe facts, and in the age in which they were done, and who ſpeak of them as things publicly known, and of undoubted certainty. The proper way therefore for the enemies of Chriſtianity to have taken, would have been, to have publiſhed, if they were able, contrary authentic accounts, in that very age, for diſproving thoſe facts; which it would have been eaſy to have done, if they had been falſe: for, in that caſe, thouſands muſt have known them to be ſo; ſince many of the facts are repreſented as having been done in public view, and in the preſence of great multitudes. But that no ſuch contrary hiſtorical evidence was then produced or publiſhed, we may confidently affirm; not only becauſe there is no account of any ſuch evidence, but becauſe if the facts on which Chriſtianity is eſtabliſhed had been authentically diſproved, even in the age in which they were ſaid to have been done; and if there had been good hiſtorical evidence produced on the other ſide, by which it appeared that thoſe facts were falſe; the Chriſ-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 128, 132.

† Lord Bolingbroke ſeems to have laid a great ſtreſs upon this thought, for he elſewhere obſerves, that "if time had brought to us all the proof for "Chriſtianity and againſt it, we ſhould have been puzzled by contradictory "proofs. See his works, vol. iv. p. 270. where he preſumes upon it as a thing certain, though he does not attempt to produce the leaſt evidence for it, that there was formerly proof againſt Chriſtianity, which, if it had come down to us, would have deſtroyed the evidence brought for it, or, at leaſt, have very much weakened the force of that evidence, and kept the mind in ſuſpence.

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tian religion, conſidering the other diſadvantages that attended it, and that it was principally ſupported by thoſe facts, muſt have ſunk at once. How is it conceivable, that in that caſe it would have flouriſhed more and more; and that vaſt numbers, and many of them perſons of conſiderable ſenſe and learning, would have continued to embrace it, in the face of the greateſt difficulties and diſcouragements? How comes it, that none of the *Apologies for Chriſtianity* that were publiſhed very early, and preſented to the Roman emperors, ſome of which are ſtill extant, take any notice of ſuch contrary hiſtorical evidence, or endeavour to confute it, but ſtill ſpeak of thoſe facts as inconteſtably true and certain? The firſt heathen author that appears to have written a formal book againſt the Chriſtian religion, is Celſus: and what he advanced to this purpoſe, we learn from his own words, preſerved by Origen, in his excellent anſwer to him. He endeavoureth, as far as he can, to turn the goſpel-accounts to ridicule; but he never referreth to any authentic hiſtory, or book of credit and authority, which had been publiſhed, to ſhew that the facts, recorded by the Evangeliſts, and believed by the Chriſtians, were falſe. He pretended indeed, that "he could "tell many other things, relating to Jeſus, truer than thoſe things "that were written of him by his own diſciples; but that he "willingly paſſed them by*:" but we may be ſure, that if he had been able to produce any contrary hiſtorical evidence, which he thought was of weight ſufficient to invalidate the evangelical records, a man of his virulence and acuteneſs would not have failed to produce it; and his not having done ſo, plainly ſheweth that he knew of none ſuch; though, if there had been any ſuch, he muſt have known it. Nor do I find that Julian, when he wrote againſt Chriſtianity, pretended to produce any contrary hiſtorical evidence for diſproving the facts recorded in the goſpels: if he had, ſomething of it would have appeared in Cyril's anſwer, in which there are many fragments of his book preſerved. I think therefore the pretence of there having been contrary evidence to diſprove the facts recorded in the goſpel, which evidence was afterwards ſuppreſſed by the Chriſtians, is abſolutely vain and groundleſs. And to refuſe our aſſent to the

* Orig. contra Celſ. lib. ii. p. 67. Edit. Spencer.

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goſpel-hiſtory, for want of having an opportunity to confront it with contrary hiſtorical evidence, when we have no reaſon to think there ever was ſuch evidence, would be the moſt unreaſonable conduct in the world.

But ſtill it is urged, that the accounts of thoſe facts, in order to their obtaining full credit from any impartial perſon, ought to be confirmed by the teſtimony of thoſe who were not themſelves Chriſtians; ſince Chriſtians may be excepted againſt as prejudiced perſons; and that, if there be no ſuch teſtimony, it adminiſters juſt ground of ſuſpicion. As a great ſtreſs has been frequently laid upon this, I ſhall conſider it diſtinctly.

To expect that profeſſed enemies, who reviled and perſecuted the Chriſtians, ſhould acknowledge the truth of the main facts on which Chriſtianity is founded, is an abſurdity and contradiction. And if any teſtimonies to this purpoſe were now to be found in their writings, it would undoubtedly be alleged by thoſe gentlemen, who now complain of the want of ſuch teſtimonies, that thoſe paſſages were foiſted in by Chriſtians, and ought to be rejected as ſuppoſititious. But yet we have the teſtimony of adverſaries concerning many facts relating to Chriſtianity, as far as can be expected from adverſaries. It cannot be expected, that Jews or heathens, continuing ſuch, ſhould acknowledge Chriſt's divine miſſion; that he was the Son of God, the Saviour of the world: but none of them ever pretended to deny, that there was ſuch a perſon as Jeſus Chriſt, who was the author of the Chriſtian religion, and appeared in Judea in the reign of Tiberius. Tacitus's teſtimony, as well as that of Celſus, is very expreſs to this purpoſe*. And ſome of the heathens went ſo far as to ſpeak very honourably of him. So did the emperor Alexander Severus, who would have built a temple to him, if ſome of the pagans about him had not made ſtrong remonſtrances againſt it, as Lampridius informs us in his life†. And even Porphyry himſelf, whoſe words Euſebius hath preſerved, ſpeaks of him as a pious man, whoſe ſoul was taken into heaven‡. It would be unreaſonable to expect, that the enemies of Chriſtianity ſhould acknowledge the accounts given of Chriſt by the Evangeliſts to

* Tacit. Annal. lib. xv.

† Cap. xxix. xliii. Hiſt. Auguſt. tom. i. Edit. Var.

‡ Euſeb. Demonſtrat. Evangel. lib. iii. p. 134.

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be true and authentic, and abſolutely to be depended upon; for then they muſt have turned Chriſtians. But yet they never denied, what ſome of our modern unbelievers ſeem unwilling to acknowledge, that Chriſt's own diſciples, who had lived and converſed with him, had written accounts of his life, and actions, and diſcourſes, which were received by Chriſtians as true and authentic. The teſtimony of Celſus, as was obſerved before, is very full to the purpoſe. It cannot be expected, that Jews and heathens ſhould acknowledge Chriſt's miracles to have been really wrought by a divine power. But they do not deny, that he did, or ſeemed to do, wonderful works. And the way they take to account for them amounteth to an acknowledgment of the facts. Some aſcribed them to magical arts, as Celſus, who ſaith, that, on the account of the ſtrange things he performed, Jeſus claimed to be regarded as a God*. Others, as Hierocles, oppoſed to them the wonders pretended to have been wrought by Apollonius Tyanæus. The Jews aſcribed the works he performed to the virtue of the ineffable Name, which he ſtole out of the temple. And the emperor Julian expreſsly acknowledgeth ſome of his miraculous works, particularly his healing the lame and the blind, and caſting out devils, at the ſame time that he affects to ſpeak of them in a very ſlight and diminiſhing manner†. As to Chriſt's having ſuffered under Pontius Pilate, the heathens and Jews were ſo far from denying it, that they endeavoured to turn it to the reproach of Chriſtians, that they believed in, and worſhipped, one that had been crucified. It cannot be expected indeed, that they ſhould own, that he really roſe again from the dead on the third day, as he himſelf had foretold; but they acknowledge, that his diſciples declared that he did ſo, and profeſſed to have ſeen him, and converſed with him, after his reſurrection. This appeareth from the teſtimony of Celſus, at the ſame time that he endeavours to ridicule the account given by the Evangeliſts of Chriſt's reſurrection‡. The Jews, by pretending that the diſciples ſtole away the body of Jeſus, whilſt the ſoldiers that were appointed to guard it ſlept, plainly acknow-

* Orig. contra Celſ. lib. i. p. 7. 22. 30.

† See his words in Cyril contra Julian. lib. vi. p. 121. Edit. Spanheim.

‡ Orig. contra Celſ. lib. ii. p. 94. 96, 97. lib. vii. p. 355.

ledged,

ledged, that the body did not remain in the ſepulchre where it had been laid after his crucifixion; and that therefore he might have riſen from the dead, for any thing they could prove to the contrary. The early and remarkable diffuſion of Chriſtianity, notwithſtanding all the difficulties it had to encounter with, and the perſecutions to which the profeſſors of it were expoſed, is a very important fact, and which, as the caſe was circumſtanced, tends very much to confirm the truth of the goſpel-accounts. And this is very fully atteſted by heathen writers, though it cannot be expected, that they would aſcribe this propagation of Chriſtianity to its proper cauſes, the force of truth, and a divine power accompanying it.

Tacitus, in a paſſage where he expreſſeth himſelf in a manner that ſhews he was ſtrongly prejudiced againſt Chriſtianity, informs us, that there was a *great multitude* of Chriſtians at Rome in Nero's time, which was in little more than thirty years after the death of our Saviour; and gives an account of the terrible torments and ſufferings to which they were expoſed *. Julian, ſpeaking of the Evangeliſt John, whom he repreſents as one of Chriſt's own diſciples, ſaith, that in his time a great multitude, in moſt of the cities of Greece and Italy, were ſeized with that diſeaſe (for ſo he calls Chriſtianity), and that John, obſerving this, was encouraged to aſſert that Chriſt was God, which none of the other apoſtles had done †. And we learn from the younger Pliny, that in the reign of Trajan, *i. e.* about ſeventy years after our Lord's crucifixion, the Chriſtian faith had made ſuch a progreſs in ſeveral parts of the Roman empire, that the temples of the gods were almoſt deſolate; their ſolemn ſacred rites long neglected; and that there were very few that would buy the ſacrifices ‡. It cannot be expected, that heathens, continuing ſuch, ſhould acknowledge that the Chriſtians were right in their notions of religion; but the laſt mentioned celebrated heathen gives a noble teſtimony to the innocency of their lives and manners, and that they bound themſelves by the moſt ſacred engagements to the practice of righteouſneſs and virtue, and not to allow themſelves in vice and wickedneſs, falſehood and

* Tacit. Annal. lib. xv. † See the paſſage in Cyril, lib. x. p. 327.
‡ Plin. lib. x. Ep. 97. ad Trajan.

impurity,

impurity. Even Celſus, than whom Chriſtianity never had a more bitter enemy, owns, that there were among Chriſtians *many temperate, modeſt,* and *underſtanding perſons**." And Julian recommends to his heathen pontiff Arſacius the example of the Chriſtians, for their kindneſs and humanity to ſtrangers, and not only to thoſe of their own religion, but to the heathens; and for their apparent ſanctity of life; and this he ſuppoſes to be the chief cauſe why Chriſtianity had made ſuch a progreſs †. If none but Chriſtian writers had celebrated the conſtancy of the ancient martyrs, ſome would have been ready to have ſuſpected, that they feigned this to do them honour, or, at leaſt, greatly heightened it: but it appeareth from the undoubted teſtimonies of the above mentioned Pliny, of Arrian, who flouriſhed under the reign of Hadrian, and of the emperor Marcus Antoninus, that the ancient Chriſtians were very remarkable for their fortitude and contempt of torments and death, and for their inflexible firmneſs and conſtancy to their religion under the greateſt ſufferings ‡.

Though therefore it were abſurd to expect, that the enemies of Chriſtianity, continuing ſuch, ſhould directly atteſt the truth and certainty of the main facts on which the Chriſtian religion is founded; yet we have ſeveral teſtimonies from them, that contribute not a little to the confirmation of thoſe facts. Beſides which, what ought to have great weight with us, we have the teſtimony of perſons who were once Jews or heathens, and ſtrongly prejudiced againſt the Chriſtian ſyſtem, who yet, upon the convincing evidence they had of thoſe facts, were themſelves brought over to the religion of Jeſus §. Of ſuch perſons there were great numbers even in the firſt age, the age in which the facts were done, and in which they had the beſt opportunity of inquiring into the truth and certainty of them. But there could not be a more remarkable inſtance of this kind than the apoſtle Paul. Never was there any man more ſtrongly prejudiced againſt Chriſtianity than he: which had carried him ſo far, that he was very active in perſecuting the profeſſors of it, and thought

* Orig. contra Celſ. lib. i. p. 22. † Julian. Ep. xlix. ad Arſac.
‡ Plin. ubi ſup. Arrian Epict. lib. iv. cap. 7. Marcus Anton. lib. xi. 3.
§ See Addiſon's Treatiſe of the Chriſtian Religion, ſect. iii. iv.

that

that in doing ſo he had done God good ſervice. He was at the ſame time a perſon of great parts and acuteneſs, and who had a learned education; yet he was brought over to the Chriſtian faith by a divine power and evidence, which he was not able to reſiſt; and thenceforth did more than any other of the apoſtles to propagate the religion of Jeſus: though thereby he not only forfeited all his hopes of worldly intereſt and advancement, but expoſed himſelf to a ſucceſſion of the moſt grievous reproaches, perſecutions, and ſufferings; all which he bore with an invincible conſtancy, and even with a divine exultation and joy. In his admirable epiſtles, which were undeniably written in the firſt age of Chriſtianity, and than which no writings can bear more unconteſted marks of genuine purity and integrity, there are continual references to the principal facts recorded in the goſpels, as of undoubted truth and certainty. And it manifeſtly appeareth, that great miracles were then wrought in the name of Jeſus, and that extraordinary gifts were poured forth upon the diſciples. And why ſhould not his teſtimony in favour of Chriſtianity be of the greateſt force? Muſt it be diſregarded becauſe of his turning Chriſtian, *i. e.* becauſe he was ſo convinced of thoſe facts by the ſtrongeſt evidence, that it over-ruled all his prejudices, and brought him over to Chriſtianity, in oppoſition to all his former notions, inclinations, and intereſts? Whereas it is this very thing that giveth his teſtimony a peculiar force*. And if he had not turned Chriſtian, his teſtimony in favour of Chriſtianity, if he had given any, would not have had ſo great weight, as being inſufficient for his own conviction; or it would have been rejected as a forgery, under pretence that he could not ſay and believe ſuch things without embracing the Chriſtian faith.

This very pretence has been made uſe of to ſet aſide the remarkable teſtimony of Joſephus. And indeed, if that teſtimony be genuine (and a great deal has been ſtrongly urged to prove it ſo, at leaſt for the ſubſtance of it), it muſt be acknowledged, that he was far from being an enemy to Chriſtianity, though he was perhaps too much a courtier openly to profeſs it.

There is another argument, which the ingenious author of

* See this clearly and ſolidly argued in Sir George Lyttelton's excellent Obſervations on the Converſion and Apoſtleſhip of St. Paul.

theſe Letters propoſeth, and upon which he layeth no ſmall ſtreſs, as if it were a demonſtration againſt the divine authority of the Chriſtian religion. He obſerves, that—"the writers of the "Romiſh religion have attempted to ſhew, that the text of the "holy writ is on many accounts inſufficient to be the ſole cri-"terion of orthodoxy;" and he apprehends they have ſhewn it: "And the writers of the reformed religion have erected their "batteries againſt tradition: and that they have jointly laid their "axes to the root of Chriſtianity: that men will be apt to rea-"ſon upon what they have advanced, that there remains at "this time no ſtandard at all of Chriſtianity: and that, by conſe-"quence, either this religion was not originally of divine inſtitu-"tion, or elſe God has not provided effectually for preſerving "the genuine purity of it, and the gates of hell have actually "prevailed, in contradiction to his promiſe, againſt the Church. "He muſt be worſe than an atheiſt that affirms the laſt: and there-"fore the beſt effect of this reaſoning that can be hoped for is, "that men ſhould fall into Theiſm, and ſubſcribe to the firſt;"—*viz.* that the Chriſtian religion was not originally of divine inſtitution*. He ſeems to think this dilemma unanſwerable; and in order to this, he pronounceth, on the ſide of the Romiſh church, that their writers have ſhewn, that the ſacred text is—"inſufficient to be the ſole criterion of orthodoxy;"—or, as he afterwards expreſſeth it, that—"it hath not that authenticity, "clearneſs and preciſion, which are neceſſary to eſtabliſh it as a "divine and certain rule of faith and practice."—Why his Lordſhip giveth the preference to the Romiſh divines in this controverſy, is very evident. It is becauſe it beſt anſwereth the deſign he hath in view; which manifeſtly is, to ſubvert the credit and authority of the Chriſtian religion, and leave it nothing to depend upon but the *force of education*, and *the civil and eccleſiaſtical power*.

It cannot be denied, that ſome writers of the Romiſh Church, whilſt they have endeavoured to ſhew that the ſcripture is inſufficient to be a complete rule of faith and practice, have ſaid as much to expoſe the ſacred text, as if they were in league with the infidels againſt it, though they, as well as we, profeſs to own

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 179, 180, 181.

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its divine original. The enemies of Chriſtianity have not failed to take advantage of this. And indeed there cannot be a greater abſurdity than to ſuppoſe, that God ſhould inſpire men to reveal his will to mankind, and to inſtruct them in the way of ſalvation, and order it ſo, that they ſhould commit that revelation to writing, for the uſe and benefit of his church; and yet that it ſhould be inſufficient to anſwer the end, or to guide thoſe that, in the ſincerity of their hearts, and with the attention which becometh them in an affair of ſuch infinite importance, apply themſelves to the underſtanding and practiſing of it.

What his Lordſhip here offers (and it contains the ſum of what has been advanced by the Romiſh writers on this ſubject), is this—"I am ſure that experience, from the firſt promulgation "of Chriſtianity to this hour, ſhews abundantly, with how much "eaſe and ſucceſs, the moſt oppoſite, the moſt extravagant, nay, "the moſt impious opinions, and the moſt contradictory faiths, "may be founded on the ſame text, and plauſibly defended by "the ſame authority*."—This way of arguing beareth a near affinity to that which lieth at the foundation of all ſcepticiſm, *viz.* that there is no certain criterion of truth, or right reaſon, becauſe reaſon is pretended for the moſt contradictory opinions: and that it is impoſſible to be certain of any thing, becauſe of the differences among mankind about every thing: that there are no certain principles at all, even in natural religion or morality; ſince there are none, not even thoſe relating to the exiſtence and perfections of God, a Providence, a future ſtate, the natural differences of good and evil, but what have been controverted; and that by perſons who have pretended to learning, to wiſdom, and philoſophy. But the abſurdity of this way of arguing is very evident. The principle is fallacious, that whatever hath been controverted is uncertain. As well might it be ſaid, that whatever is capable of being abuſed is not good or uſeful. It doth not follow, that the ſcriptures are not ſufficiently clear and determinate to be a rule of faith and practice in all that is eſſential or neceſſary to ſalvation, becauſe there have been men in every age that have interpreted them in different ſenſes. The plaineſt paſſages in any writings whatſoever may be perverted; nor is

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. i. p. 179.

men's differing about the meaning of the ſacred text any argument againſt its certainty or perſpicuity. Laws may be of great uſe, though they do not abſolutely exclude chicanery and evaſion. That can never be a good argument to prove, that the ſcriptures are not a rule to be depended upon, which would equally prove, that no revelation that God could give could poſſibly be a rule of faith and practice, or of any uſe to guide men to truth and happineſs. If God ſhould make a revelation of his will, for inſtructing mankind in what it moſt nearly concerneth them to know, and for directing them in the way of ſalvation (the poſſibility of which cannot be denied by any theiſt), and ſhould for this purpoſe appoint a code to be publiſhed, containing doctrines and laws; it may be juſtly queſtioned, whether it could poſſibly be made ſo clear and explicit, as that all men in all ages ſhould agree in their ſenſe of it. This could hardly be expected, except God ſhould miraculouſly interpoſe, with an irreſiſtible influence, to cauſe them all to think the ſame way, and give them the ſame preciſe ideas of things, the ſame meaſures of natural abilities, and exactly the ſame means and opportunities for acquiring improvement, the ſame ſagacity, the ſame leiſure, the ſame diligence; and except he ſhould exert his divine power in an extraordinary manner, for ſubduing or removing all their prejudices, and over-ruling their different paſſions, humours, inclinations, and intereſts; and ſhould place them all exactly in the ſame ſituation and circumſtances. And this would be by no means conſiſtent with the wiſdom of the divine government, or with the nature of man, and his freedom as a moral agent, and with the methods and orders of Providence. Nor is there any neceſſity for ſo extraordinary a procedure: for it would be abſurd to the laſt degree to pretend, that the ſcripture can be of no uſe to any man, except all men were to agree about it; or that it is not ſufficiently clear to anſwer the end, if there be any perſons that pervert or abuſe it.

Yet, after all the clamour that has been raiſed about differences among Chriſtians as to the ſenſe of Scripture, there are many things of great importance, about which there hath been in all ages a very general agreement among profeſſed Chriſtians: They are agreed, that there is one God, who made heaven and earth, and all things which are therein: That he preſerveth all things by

by the word of his Power, and governeth all things by his Providence: That he is infinitely powerful, wife, and good, and is to be loved, feared, adored, obeyed, above all: That as there is one God, fo there is one Mediator between God and man, Jefus Chrift *the righteous*, whom he, in his infinite love and mercy, fent into the world to fave and to redeem us: That he came to inftruct us by his doctrine, and bring a clear revelation of the divine will, and to fet before us a bright and moft perfect example for our imitation: That he fubmitted to the moft grievous fufferings, and to death itfelf, for our fakes, that he might obtain eternal redemption for us: That he rofe again from the dead, and afcended into heaven, and is now crowned with glory and honour, and ever liveth to make interceffion for us: That through him, and in his name, we are to offer up our prayers, and hope for the acceptance of our perfons and fervices, and for gracious affiftances in the performance of our duty: That in him there is a new covenant eftablifhed, and publifhed to the world, in which there is a free and univerfal offer of pardon and mercy to all the truly penitent, and a moft expreſs promife of eternal life, as the reward of our fincere, though imperfect obedience: That it is not enough to have a bare fpeculative faith, but we muft be formed into an holy and godlike temper; and, in order to be prepared for that future happinefs, muft live foberly, righteoufly, and godly, in this prefent world: That there fhall be a refurrection both of the juft and of the unjuft, and a future judgment, when Chrift fhall judge the world in the Father's name, and give to every man according to his deeds: That the wicked fhall be doomed to the moft grievous punifhments; and the righteous fhall be unfpeakably happy to all eternity. Thefe are things of great conſequence, and which have been generally acknowledged by Chriftians in all ages. And if there have been feveral things advanced by thofe that call themfelves Chriftians, which are not well conſiſtent with theſe generally-acknowledged principles; if there have been controverfies among them about points of conſiderable importance, as well as many contentions about things of little or no moment, this is no argument againſt the divine authority or uſefulneſs of the ſacred writings. Thoſe that *wreſt the Scriptures* muſt be accountable to him that gave them, for that perverſion and abuſe; as men muſt be account-

able for the abuſe of their reaſon: but this is far from proving, that therefore the Scriptures anſwer no valuable purpoſe, and could not be of a divine original. Still it is true, that whoſoever will, with a teachable and attentive mind, and an upright intention to know and do the will of God, apply himſelf to read and conſider the holy Scriptures, in an humble dependence on God's gracious aſſiſtances, will find vaſt advantage for inſtructing him in the knowledge of religion, and engaging him to the practice of it, and for guiding him in the way of ſalvation.

It appears then, that the foundation, on which this formidable dilemma is built, will not bear. There is at this time a *ſtandard for Chriſtianity;* even the doctrines and laws of our Saviour and his apoſtles, as contained in the holy Scriptures. It muſt be and is acknowledged by all that profeſs themſelves Chriſtians, that whatever is revealed in thoſe ſacred books is true and certain, and whatever can be ſhewn to be contrary to what is there revealed is falſe. The Romaniſts as well as Proteſtants own the divinity and authenticity of the ſacred text, though for particular views they would join unwritten tradition with it: and are for giving the church alone the authority to interpret the Scriptures. The reaſon of their conduct is evident. It is not becauſe they look upon the ſacred text to be ſo obſcure and ambiguous, that it cannot be underſtood by the people; but becauſe they think the people, if left to themſelves, will underſtand it ſo far as to ſee the inconſiſtency there is between true primitive Chriſtianity, as laid down in the New Teſtament, and the papal ſyſtem, and becauſe their corrupt additions to Chriſtianity cannot be proved by Scripture-authority.

I have already taken notice of what he ſaith concerning the fatal blow that Chriſtianity received by the reſurrection of letters. I ſuppoſe we are to take his word as a deciſive proof of this; for no other proof of it is offered. But it may be affirmed on the contrary, that true primitive Chriſtianity, that is, Chriſtianity as laid down in the New Teſtament, had then a glorious revival. Many corrupt additions that had been made to it were thrown off. It hath never been better underſtood, nor its evidences ſet in a clearer light, than ſince that time. Some of the moſt admired names in the republic of letters have thought themſelves worthily employed in endeavouring to illuſtrate the beau-

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ties of Scripture, and to clear its difficulties. It were eaſy to ſhew, if it were not a thing ſo well known as to render it needleſs, that thoſe who have done moſt for the revival and ſpreading of learning and knowledge in all its branches, and who were moſt celebrated for their genius, judgment, various reading, and probity, have been perſons that expreſſed a great admiration for the holy Scriptures, and an hearty zeal for Chriſtianity.

Thus I have conſidered what the late Lord Bolingbroke hath offered in theſe Letters againſt the authority of the holy Scripture, and the Chriſtian religion, as far as may be neceſſary to take off the force of the objections he hath raiſed againſt it, and which ſeem to have nothing in them proportioned to the unuſual confidence with which they are advanced. It is hard to ſee what good end could be propoſed by ſuch an attempt. But perhaps it may be thought an advantage, that by "diſcovering error "in firſt principles founded upon facts, and breaking the charm, "the inchanted caſtle, the ſteepy rock, the burning lake will "diſappear*." And there are perſons, no doubt, that would be well pleaſed to ſee it proved, that Chriſtianity is no better than deluſion and enchantment; and particularly, that the wicked have nothing to fear from *the burning lake*, ſome apprehenſions of which may probably tend to make them uneaſy in their vicious courſes. But I ſhould think, that a true lover of virtue, and of mankind, who impartially conſiders the purity of the goſpel-morals, the excellent tendency of its doctrines and precepts, and the power of its motives for engaging men to the practice of piety and virtue, and deterring them from vice and wickedneſs, will be apt to look upon it as a very ill employment, to endeavour to expoſe this religion to contempt, and to ſet bad men free from the wholeſome terrors it inſpires, and deprive good men of the ſublime hopes and ſacred joys it yields. But Chriſtianity hath withſtood much more formidable attacks, and will, I doubt not, continue to approve itſelf to thoſe that examine it, and the evidences by which it is eſtabliſhed, with minds free from vicious prejudices, and with that ſincerity and ſimplicity of heart, that ſerioufneſs and attention, which becomes them in an affair of ſuch vaſt importance.

* See his *Letter on the Uſe of Study and Retirement*, vol. ii. p. 221.

LETTER XXXV.

The Account of the Deiſtical Writers cloſed—General Reflections on thoſe Writers—The high Encomiums they beſtow upon themſelves, and their own Performances, and the Contempt they expreſs for others—They differ among themſelves about the moſt important Principles of natural Religion—The unfair Methods they take with regard to Chriſtianity—No Writers diſcover ſtronger Marks of Prejudice—The Guilt and Danger of rejecting the Chriſtian Revelation—An Averſion to the Laws of the Goſpel, one of the principal Cauſes of Infidelity—Terms propoſed by the Deiſts for making up the Differences between them and the Chriſtians—Their Pretence of placing Religion wholly in Practice, and not in uſeleſs Speculations, conſidered.

SIR,

I SHALL now cloſe the account of the deiſtical writers who have appeared among us for above a century paſt, and ſhall take occaſion to ſubjoin ſome reflections which ſeem naturally to ariſe upon this ſubject.

If we were to judge of the merit of theſe writers, by the encomiums they have beſtowed upon their own performances, and the account they have given of their deſigns and views, we ſhould be apt to entertain a very favourable opinion of them, as perſons to whom the world is under great obligations. Dr. Tindal begins and ends his book with declaring, that his ſcheme *tends to the honour of God, and the happineſs of human ſocieties*; that there *is none who wiſh well to mankind, but muſt alſo wiſh his hypotheſis to be true*; and that *it moſt effectually prevents the growth both of ſcepticiſm and enthuſiaſm*. The *Moral Philoſopher* every where ſpeaks very advantageouſly of himſelf, as having nothing in view but to vindicate and promote the cauſe of *real religion*, and *moral truth* and *righteouſneſs*. The author of *Chriſtianity not founded on Argument*, ſpends ſome pages in recapitulating and extolling his own work. The ſame obſervation may be made concerning the author of the *Reſurrection*

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of Jeſus conſidered. He declares, " that reaſon is his only " rule, and the diſplaying truth his only aim: that his deſign " is to recover the dignity of virtue, and to promote that ve- " neration for wiſdom and truth, which have been deſtroyed " by faith *." And he concludes with expreſſing his hope, that his " treatiſe will be of real ſervice to religion, and make " men's practice better, when they find they have nothing elſe " to depend upon for happineſs, here and hereafter, but their " own perſonal righteouſneſs, with their love of wiſdom and " truth †." In like manner Mr. Chubb has, in his *Farewell to his Readers*, with great ſolemnity, told the world how much they are obliged to him for having taken care to leave them his inſtructions in matters of the higheſt importance. Mr. Hume aſſumes the merit of throwing light upon the moſt *curious* and *ſublime ſubjects*, with regard to which all the *received ſyſtems* had been *extremely defective*, and which *had eſcaped the moſt elaborate ſcrutiny and examination*. He propoſes to *reconcile profound inquiry with clearneſs, and truth with novelty*, and to *undermine the foundations of an abſtruſe philoſophy, which ſeems to have ſerved hitherto only as a ſhelter to ſuperſtition, and a cover to abſurdity and error* ‡. And he begins his *Eſſay upon Miracles* with declaring, that " he flatters himſelf that he " has diſcovered an argument, which, if juſt, will with the wiſe " and learned be an everlaſting check to all kinds of ſuperſti- " tious deluſion, and conſequently will be uſeful as long as the " world endures §. Lord Bolingbroke makes the moſt pompous profeſſions of his intentions to *ſeparate truth* from *falſehood, knowledge* from *ignorance, revelations of the Creator* from *inventions of the creature, dictates of reaſon* from the *ſallies of enthuſiaſm*—and to *go to the root of that error, which ſuſtains our pride, fortifies our prejudices, and gives pretence to deluſion*—to *diſcover the true nature of human knowledge—how far it is real, and how it begins to be fantaſtical*—that the *gaudy*

* *Reſurrection of Jeſus conſidered*, p. 72. † Ibid. p. 82.

‡ Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 18, 19. and his *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, p. 172.

§ See Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 174.

viſions

viſions of error being diſpelled, men may be accuſtomed to the ſimplicity of truth *.

Nor do theſe gentlemen only join in repreſenting themſelves as perſons of extraordinary penetration, and of the moſt upright intentions; but they ſometimes ſeem to claim a kind of infallibility. They talk of having their *underſtandings irradiated with the beams of immutable eternal reaſon*, ſo that *they are ſure not to run into any errors of moment*. And that they have an *infallible mark* and *criterion of divine truth*, in which *men cannot be miſtaken* †. They propoſe to direct men to *the eternal and invariable rule of right and wrong*, as to an *infallible guide*, and as the ſolid *ground of peace and ſafety* ‡. They aſſure us, that *deiſm*, or the religion they would recommend, is "bright as the heavenly light, and free from all ambiguities; "that it makes all men happy that embrace it; that it perfectly "ſatisfies all doubts, and procures the troubled ſoul unſhaken "reſt §."

And as they take care to recommend themſelves, and their own writings, to the eſteem and admiration of mankind, ſo they give a very diſadvantageous idea of thoſe that ſtand up as advocates for revealed religion. They ſpeak in a ſneering contemptuous way of ſuch books as Stillingfleet's *Origines Sacræ*, Dr. Clarke's *Diſcourſe of Natural and Revealed Religion, the Analogy of Reaſon and Revelation, &c.* and the excellent diſcourſes at Boyle's lectures ‖. A writer of great note among them thinks fit to repreſent the Chriſtian divines, as, for the moſt part, *mortal enemies to the exerciſe of reaſon*, and *below brutes* **. Another charges them, as acting as if they *wanted either underſtanding or honeſty*. And he aſſures us, that "thoſe who think "moſt freely, have the leaſt ſhare of faith, and that in propor-"tion as our underſtandings are improved, faith diminiſhes." The ſame writer expreſsly calls it *fooliſh faith*, and faith, that

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 328. 331.

† *Chriſtianity as old as the Creation*, p. 336. edit. 8vo. *Mor. Phil.* vol. i. p. 92.

‡ Chubb's Poſthumous Works, vol. ii. p. 249.

§ *Reſurrection of Jeſus conſidered*, p. 9.

‖ *Chriſtianity not founded on Argument.*

** *Chriſtianity as old as the Creation*, p. 250, 251.

"in

" in this glorious time of light and liberty, this divine hag, " with her pious witchcrafts, which were brought forth in dark- " neſs, and nouriſhed by obſcurity, faint at the approach of day, " and vaniſh upon ſight *." And one of their lateſt and moſt admired authors hath thought fit to paſs this arrogant cenſure upon all that believe the Chriſtian religion—that " Whoſoever " is moved by faith to aſſent to it, is conſcious of a continued " miracle in his own perſon, which ſubverts all the principles " of his underſtanding, and gives him a determination to believe " whatever is moſt contrary to cuſtom and experience †." Lord Bolingbroke brings it as a charge againſt both clergy and laity, who believe Chriſtianity, that they have been hitherto either *not impartial, or ſagacious enough, to take an accurate examination, or not honeſt enough to communicate it* ‡. And he takes all occaſions to pour forth the moſt virulent contempt and reproach upon the moſt eminent Chriſtian divines and philoſophers, both ancient and modern. Many inſtances of this kind have been obſerved above in the firſt volume of this work, 22d Letter, and this vol. Letter 25th.

After ſuch ſpecious profeſſions, it would be natural to expect, that theſe gentlemen ſhould oblige the world with clearer *directions* than have been hitherto given to lead mankind to truth and happineſs. But this is far from being the caſe: they indeed all join in endeavouring to ſubvert revealed religion, but they are by no means agreed what to ſubſtitute in its room. They often ſpeak magnificently of keeping cloſe to the *eternal reaſon and nature of things*, and profeſs a high eſteem for what they call the *uncorrupted religion of reaſon and nature, which is always invariably the ſame* §. But when they come to explain themſelves more particularly, it is not eaſy to know what they intend by it. Some of them have reckoned among the principles of natural religion, and which are of great importance to mankind, the belief of God's univerſal and particular providence, his moral government of the world and of mankind, the obli-

* *Reſurrection of Jeſus conſidered*, p. 4. 8. 72. † Ibid.

‡ Bolingbroke's *Letters on the Study and Uſe of Hiſtory*, vol. i. p. 181.

§ Chubb's Poſthumous Works, vol. ii. in the Appendix.

gations

gations we are under to pray to him and worſhip him, the natural differences of moral good and evil, man's free agency, the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate of retributions. Others of their applauded writers deny ſeveral of theſe principles, or, or leaſt, repreſent them as abſolutely uncertain. And though, when they want to make a fair appearance to the world, theſe principles are to paſs as making a part of the deiſt's creed, yet it cannot be denied, that the general effect and tendency of their writings has rather been to unſettle theſe foundations, and introduce an univerſal ſcepticiſm and indifference to all religion. When ſuch perſons therefore ſet up for benefactors to mankind, it puts one in mind of the boaſts of the Epicureans, who ſpeak in high terms of the obligations the world was under to their great maſter Epicurus, for undertaking the glorious work of reſcuing mankind from the unſufferable yoke of ſuperſtition, by freeing them from the fear of God, and the apprehenſions of providence, and a future ſtate of retributions. And even with regard to thoſe of the deiſts that put on the faireſt appearances, I think it may be truly ſaid, that it is not among them that we muſt look for the beſt and moſt perfect ſcheme, even of natural religion. What has been done to greateſt advantage this way has been done by Chriſtian writers, who have produced the nobleſt ſyſtems of natural religion, and have taken pains to eſtabliſh its great principles on the ſureſt foundations. And to what can this be reaſonably aſcribed, but to the clearer light which the Chriſtian revelation hath thrown upon this ſubject, and the excellent helps and aſſiſtances it hath brought us? It appeareth then, that if it be of any advantage to mankind to have natural religion ſet in a clear light, and ſtrongly enforced, the deiſts have no right to appropriate the honour of this to themſelves, or to ſet up for benefactors to mankind on this account. Much leſs have they reaſon to value themſelves upon their oppoſition to the Chriſtian religion. If the account ſome of themſelves have given of the nature and deſign of Chriſtianity be juſt, they muſt be very badly employed that endeavour to ſubvert its credit and authority. Lord Herbert calls it the *beſt religion*, and ſaith, that all its doctrines, ordinances, precepts, ſacraments, aim at the eſtabliſhment of thoſe five important articles, in which he

makes

makes all religion to consist*. Dr. Tindal owns, that "Chris-"tianity itself, stripped of all additions that policy, mistake, and "the circumstances of time have made to it, is a most holy re-"ligion†." The *Moral Philosopher* frequently expresseth himself to the same purpose; and Mr. Chubb acknowledgeth, that "Christianity, if it could be separated from every thing that hath "been blended with it, yields a much clearer light, and is a more "safe guide to mankind, than any other traditionary religion, as "being better adapted to improve and perfect human nature‡." Lord Bolingbroke represents it as a *most amiable* and *useful institution*, and that its *natural tendency is to promote the peace and happiness of mankind*. That the *system of religion* it teaches is a *complete system*, to all *the purposes of religion natural and revealed*,—and might have continued so, to the *unspeakable advantage of mankind, if it had been propagated with the same simplicity with which it was taught by Christ himself*§. If therefore they had laid out their pains in endeavouring to separate true original Christianity from the corrupt additions that have been made to it, and to engage men to a stricter adherence, in principle and practice, to the religion of Jesus in its primitive purity and simplicity, as delivered by Christ and his apostles in the New Testament, they might have had some pretence to the character they seem willing to claim, of friends and benefactors to mankind. But the method they have taken is very different: at the same time that they have affected to commend pure original Christianity, they have used their utmost efforts to subvert its divine authority, and thus to deprive it of its influence on the minds of men, and set them loose from all obligations to believe and obey it. This is a manifest proof, that it is not merely the corruptions of Christianity that they find fault with, but the Christian revelation itself, which they have not scrupled to represent as the product of enthusiasm or imposture.

Various are the ways they have taken to destroy its credit and authority, as sufficiently appeareth from the account which hath

* *Herbert relig. laici*, p. 9, 10.

† *Christianity as old as the Creation*, p. 382. edit. 8vo.

‡ Chubb's Posthumous Works, vol. ii. p. 370.

§ Several other Passages to this purpose are collected above in the 31st Letter.

been

been given in the foregoing Letters. And conſidering how many writers have appeared in this cauſe within this century paſt, and what liberty they have had to propoſe their reaſonings and their objections, it can hardly be ſuppoſed they have left any thing unattempted that had the face of argument, by which they thought they could anſwer their end. And therefore if it appears, as I hope it does, upon the view which hath been taken of them, that their moſt plauſible objections have been ſolidly anſwered; it is to be hoped, that their attempts, however ill intended, will turn to the advantage of the Chriſtian cauſe; as it will thence appear, how little its enemies have been able to ſay againſt it, conſidered in its original purity, even where they have had the utmoſt freedom of propoſing their ſentiments. They have appealed to the bar of reaſon; the advocates for Chriſtianity have followed them to that bar, and have fairly ſhewn, that the evidences of revealed religion are ſuch as approve themſelves to impartial reaſon, and, if taken together, are fully ſufficient to ſatisfy an honeſt and unprejudiced mind.

Although therefore it cannot but give great concern to all that have a juſt zeal for our holy religion, that ſo many, inſtead of being duly thankful for the glorious light of the goſpel which ſhineth among us, have uſed their utmoſt endeavours to expoſe it to contempt and reproach: yet, on the other hand, it yields matter of agreeable reflection, that there have been as many valuable defences of Chriſtianity publiſhed among us within this century paſt, as can be produced in any age. Beſides thoſe mentioned in the foregoing Letters, there have been many excellent treatiſes, ſetting forth the reaſons and evidences of the Chriſtian religion, which the nature of the work I have been engaged in did not lead me to take notice of, as they were not written profeſſedly in anſwer to any of thoſe deiſtical books which I had occaſion to mention.

It is a reflection that muſt obviouſly occur, upon a review of the account which hath been given of the authors who have appeared againſt Chriſtianity, that they have been far from contenting themſelves with ſober reaſoning, as might be expected in a caſe on which ſo much depends. The weapons they have chiefly made uſe of, are thoſe of miſrepreſentation and ridicule, and often even low jeſt and buffoonery. This ſeems to be a preſumption

ſumption in favour of Chriſtianity, that its adverſaries are themſelves ſenſible that little can be done againſt it, in a way of plain reaſon and argument. It is true, there are no writers who make greater pretenſions to freedom of thought, or inveigh more ſtrongly againſt prepoſſeſſion and bigotry; ſo that one would expect, that they ſhould every-where diſcover minds open to conviction and evidence: and yet it may ſafely be affirmed, that no writers whatſoever diſcover ſtronger ſigns of prejudice; and there is great reaſon to complain that they have not carried on the debate with that fairneſs and candour which becomes the importance of the ſubject *.

Any one that is acquainted with their writings muſt be ſenſible, that it is not their way to make a fair and juſt repreſentation of true original Chriſtianity as contained in the Holy Scriptures. They throw it into falſe lights, in order to expoſe it, and often charge it with corruptions and abuſes, which they themſelves well know do not really and originally belong to it. In ſome of their books which are written in the way of dialogue, they introduce Chriſtian dialogiſts, who are to make a ſhew of defending the Chriſtian cauſe; but it is evident that it is only to betray it. Theſe dialogiſts make a moſt deſpicable figure in their writings, and are ſcarce allowed to ſay any thing that diſcovers learning or even common ſenſe, nor ever fairly ſtate the argument or evidence on the ſide of Chriſtianity. Any one that has read Tindal's *Chriſtianity as old as the Creation*, or the firſt volume of the *Moral Philoſopher*, cannot but have obſerved this.

In their treatment of the ſcriptures, they have every-where diſcovered an eager deſire and reſolution to expoſe and run them down at any rate. In examining writings of venerable antiquity and authority, a man of candour, and an impartial inquirer after truth, would be inclined to put the moſt favourable interpretation upon them that they will bear; but inſtead of this, theſe writers ſeem only ſolicitous to find out ſomething that may make the ſcriptures appear ridiculous. They take pains to wreſt and pervert them, as if they thought it meritorious to treat thoſe ſacred writings in a manner that would not be borne with regard to any

* See this clearly ſhewn in Dr. Duchal's Preface to his excellent Sermons on the preſumptive Evidences of Chriſtianity.

other

other books of the leaſt credit. Of this many inſtances might be produced. If they meet with any paſſages of ſcripture that have difficulty in them, and which at this diſtance are not eaſy to explain; and ſome ſuch paſſages muſt be expected in books of ſo great antiquity, written in times and places, as well as dialects, ſo different from our own; this is immediately improved, as if it were ſufficient to ſhew that the whole ſacred volume is falſe, or ſo corrupted as not be depended on. Thus a late celebrated author, who has endeavoured to expoſe the ſcripture hiſtory, has thought the curſe ſaid to have been pronounced by Noah upon Canaan, ſufficient to deſtroy the credit of it; but not to repeat what has been offered for explaining or vindicating that paſſage, ſuppoſing we were not able in any manner to account for it, would it not be far more reaſonable and becoming a man of ſenſe and candour, to ſuppoſe that in ſo ſhort a relation ſome circumſtances are omitted, which, if known, would ſet it in a fair light, rather than, on account of an obſcure paſſage, to reject and diſcard the authority of the whole?

What can be a plainer proof of the power of their prejudices, than to advance rules, in judging of the truth and credibility of ſcripture hiſtory, which would be abſolutely rejected and exploded, if applied to any other hiſtory in the world; and to reject the evidence as inſufficient with regard to the facts recorded in the goſpel, which they themſelves would count ſufficient with regard to any other facts done in paſt ages? What greater ſign of prejudice, than when they are not able to invalidate the truth of the goſpel-records, or to ſhew that they have not been ſafely tranſmitted to us, to fly out into general clamours and invectives againſt all hiſtorical evidence whatſoever, as abſolutely uncertain? The author of *Chriſtianity not founded on Argument* ſpeaks out, and plainly declares that no man ought to believe any thing but what he ſees with his own eyes. "To believe a "thing," ſays he, "becauſe another man ſays he ſaw it, is a very "unprecedented and new ſort of logic*." And it is a conſtant topic with theſe writers to declaim againſt every thing as uncertain that comes to us through the hands of fallible men. As if no man could be ſure that there is ſuch a place as Paris,

* *Chriſtianity not founded on Argument*, p. 53.

except

except he had been there, or that there had been ſuch a perſon as Queen Elizabeth. Moral certainty is ridiculed and expoſed; though nothing can be more plain, from the very frame of our nature, and the circumſtances in which we are placed by divine providence here on earth, than that the author of our beings deſigned that we ſhould in many caſes be determined by moral evidence and teſtimony, and that we ſhould acquieſce in it, as fully ſufficient*. It is what all men, even the wiſeſt, do in numberleſs inſtances, and think it reaſonable to do ſo. And to reject all this at once, is a certain ſign of their being reduced to the laſt diſtreſs in point of argument. And if the advocates for revelation were driven to ſuch ſhifts, they would no doubt be treated as irreconcileable enemies to reaſon and common ſenſe.

Many other things might be mentioned which ſhew the ſtrength of their prejudices againſt Chriſtianity. They often make uſe of arguments, which, if they were good for any thing, would hold for caſting off all religion, all certainty of reaſon, all learning and inſtruction, and, if purſued to their genuine conſequences, would introduce univerſal barbariſm. And what a ſtrange prejudice does this argue, to have ſuch an averſion for Chriſtianity, as to be willing to throw off all religion, learning, and knowledge, rather than admit it! If they can but expoſe revealed religion, it ſeems to give them very little concern, though natural religion falls with it: ſome of their admired authors argue againſt all methods of education, all attempts to inſtruct children in the principles of religion or morality. This is an extraordinary refinement of the preſent age. The beſt and wiſeſt men of all former ages have looked upon it to be a thing of vaſt conſequence, to ſeaſon the minds of children betimes, with good and juſt notions of things. But ſome of our modern free-thinkers have, in their ſuperior wiſdom, found out, that the beſt way would be to leave children entirely to themſelves, without any inſtruction or cultivation at all. This is the ſcheme of the author of *Chriſtianity not founded on Argument*; and another of their applauded writers, Dr. Tindal, ſeems ſometimes to declare againſt all inſtruction, by word or writing, as uſeleſs or

* See this excellently ſtated and cleared in Ditton on the Reſurrection, part 2d.

needleſs, and as only tending to turn men aſide from attending to the things themſelves, and to the pure ſimple dictates of nature.

Their deſire at any rate to ſubvert Chriſtianity has involved them in many inconſiſtencies. Sometimes, to ſhew that there is no need or uſe of divine revelation, the powers of reaſon in matters of religion are mightily extolled, as if it were able to do every thing by its own force, without any aſſiſtance. At other times, to render us indifferent to religion, reaſon is degraded; and it is expreſsly declared, that "it is not her proper "province to judge of religion at all; nor is this an affair in "which ſhe has the leaſt concern *." Sometimes all men, even thoſe that cannot read their mother tongue, are ſuppoſed to be ſo clear-ſighted, as to be able, without any inſtruction, to know the whole of religion. At other times, the bulk of mankind are repreſented as unable to know any thing of religion, and therefore not under any obligation to believe it, and as not capable of judging where there is any thing of induction or inference in the caſe.

If the doctrines of the goſpel appear, upon a ſtrict examination, to be ſuch as right reaſon approves when once they are diſcovered, then it is urged that reaſon alone might have diſcovered them, and that a revelation in ſuch caſes is perfectly needleſs, and of no uſe at all. But if there be any thing in theſe diſcoveries which was not diſcoverable by unaſſiſted reaſon, and which we could not have known but by extraordinary revelation, this is made an objection againſt receiving it; and to believe in that caſe is branded as an implicit faith, and a giving up our reaſon.

Sometimes the apoſtles are repreſented as hot-brained enthuſiaſts, who really believed themſelves to be inſpired of God, and were ſo mad as to imagine that they wrought miracles, and had extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, when there was no ſuch thing. At other times they are repreſented as artful impoſtors, who formed a ſcheme of worldly power and grandeur under ſpiritual pretences, and forged facts and evidences which they knew to be falſe.

* *Chriſtianity not founded on Argument*, p. 7.

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The character of our bleſſed Lord, as ſet before us in the goſpel, is ſo excellent and admirable, that the enemies of our holy religion know not well how to fix a ſtain upon it. But when they can find nothing in his doctrine, or in his temper or conduct, that favours of the ſpirit of this world, or of a carnal policy, they are willing to ſuppoſe, that under theſe ſpecious appearances he concealed ambitious and intereſted views, which were to take effect in the proper time. Lord Shaftesbury had inſinuated this; and it was a part of Mr. Woolſton's ſcheme to charge Chriſt with a ſecret deſign of aſpiring to temporal power and dominion, and with encouraging the Jews to take him for their king. The ſame thing is pretended by the *Moral Philoſopher*, and by the author of *The Reſurrection of Jeſus conſidered*. Thus, this malignant inſinuation is repeated by one of theſe writers after another, without any thing to ſupport it but the malice of the accuſers, and an earneſt deſire to find a flaw in the moſt perfect character: ſince both the whole of his life and conduct, and the entire ſtrain and tendency of the religion he taught, afford the ſtrongeſt proofs to the contrary. And at this rate the beſt and nobleſt characters may paſs for the worſt; and the greater marks there are of ſelf-denial and diſintereſtedneſs, the greater will the ground of ſuſpicion be.

Sometimes Jeſus and his apoſtles are repreſented as teaching wholly in a way of authority, and never applying to men's reaſon at all, and even abſolutely forbidding them to uſe their underſtandings. This is what the author of *Chriſtianity not founded on Argument* has laboured to prove. At other times, it is aſſerted, as it is particularly by the *Moral Philoſopher*, that Chriſt appealed wholly to men's own reaſon, and would not have them take any thing upon his authority at all as a teacher ſent from God, or upon any other evidence than the reaſon and nature of the thing *.

When they are not able to produce any ancient evidences againſt Chriſtianity, they preſume upon it as a certain thing, that there was evidence formerly againſt it, but that this evidence was deſtroyed, and that it was becauſe of the ſtrength of the evidence, that it was found neceſſary to deſtroy it. Thus,

* Moral Philoſopher, vol. ii. p. 23, 24. 41, 42.

theſe gentlemen know how to turn even the want of evidence againſt Chriſtianity, into an argument againſt its truth. I ſhall not here repeat what has been above offered to ſhew the vanity and unreaſonableneſs of this pretence. I ſhall only obſerve, that, according to their uſual way of repeating continually the ſame objections, this has been urged with great confidence by Mr. Woolſton, by the author of *The Reſurrection of Jeſus conſidered*, and very lately by a writer of quality, who hath diſtinguiſhed himſelf in the ſame cauſe.

Many other inſtances might be produced, by which it appears, that no writers whatſoever ſhew more apparent ſigns of ſtrong prejudice and prepoſſeſſion, than thoſe that honour themſelves with the title of *Free-thinkers*. It were greatly to be wiſhed for their own ſakes, as well as for the ſake of others, whom they take pains to pervert, that they would endeavour to diveſt themſelves of their prejudices, and would conſider the evidences for Chriſtianity with that ſerioufneſs and attention which becomes them in an affair of ſuch vaſt importance. I am ſenſible indeed, that many are ready to repreſent this as a thing of no conſequence at all. They look upon all forms of religion to be alike with regard to the favour of God, and that it is perfectly indifferent what a man profeſſes, provided he be a man of virtue. But real piety and virtue will engage a man to receive whatever he has reaſon to think is a true ſignification of the divine will. And if Chriſtianity be indeed a true revelation from God, as it claims to be, and if the declarations there made in the name of God are to be depended upon, it cannot poſſibly be a matter of indifference, whether thoſe to whom it is publiſhed and made known, receive or reject it: the believing and receiving it muſt in that caſe needs be of great conſequence to our happineſs, and to diſbelieve and reject it is infinitely hazardous. It therefore highly concerneth us to inquire, whether Chriſtianity be in reality a true divine revelation; whether the laws there preſcribed in the name of God be indeed his laws, and be obeyed as ſuch; whether the terms of acceptance there propoſed be of his own appointment; whether the promiſes there made are to be regarded as his promiſes, and the threatenings there denounced are to be conſidered as really enforced by his authority. For if they really be ſo, and we reject them without examination, or refuſe

to

to conſider them, as if they were not worthy of a ſerious thought, we ſhall be abſolutely without excuſe, and ſhall never be able to juſtify our conduct to God, or our own conſciences.

A noted deiſtical author, after having inſinuated that we need not give ourſelves the trouble to inquire into the ſeveral pretended revelations that have appeared in the world, yet thinks fit to own, that "when a revelation which aſſumes a divine character "comes to our own door, and offers itſelf to our conſideration, "and as it may poſſibly be what it is pretended to be, and as "ſuch we may poſſibly be intereſted in it, this may excite our "concern to try and prove it; otherwiſe we can be under no "obligation with regard to it*." Where he plainly ſuppoſes, that, in the caſe he puts, we are under an obligation to try and prove a revelation which aſſumes a divine character, and offers itſelf to our conſideration. And it ſtrengthens this, if the revelation itſelf, ſuppoſing it to be really given by God, does in his name require and demand our attention and ſubmiſſion, as a condition of our being intereſted in his favour. In ſuch a caſe, it muſt be no ſmall guilt to diſregard and reject it at once without a due inquiry, but eſpecially to caſt contempt and reproach upon it, and endeavour to engage others to reject it.

And the guilt and danger of rejecting that revelation is mightily heightened, if it ſhould be found, that the true cauſe of that infidelity, and of the diſregard ſhewn to that revelation, is the ſtrength of vicious appetite, and an averſion to the holy and excellent laws which are there preſcribed. And this, it is to be feared, is the caſe of the generality of thoſe among us who reject the goſpel-revelation. When we ſee them, under pretence of diſbelieving the doctrines, diſcarding the morals of the goſpel; when with Chriſtianity they ſeem to throw off the fear of God, and give themſelves up to boundleſs licentiouſneſs; there is too juſt reaſon to apprehend, that the true cauſe of their diſlike to the Chriſtian revelation, is not ſo much their being diſſatisfied with the evidences produced for it, as becauſe they cannot bear the reſtraints it lays upon their corrupt luſts and paſſions. The real end they aim at is expreſſed by one of themſelves to be, "to "ſave a ſoul from the diſmal apprehenſions of eternal damnation;"

* Chubb's Poſthumous Works, vol. i. p. 11.

to relieve a perſon " from labouring under that uneaſineſs of " mind, which he often is under, when pleaſure and Chriſtianity " come in competition *." And a late noble writer mentions it as an advantage of the way of thinking he recommends, that the *burning lake will then diſappear* †. And if, by ſhutting their eyes againſt the evidence, they could alter the real ſtate of the caſe, and render their condition ſafer than it would otherwiſe be; if their not believing *eternal damnation* would ſecure them againſt the danger of that damnation; it would be wiſely done to take pains to diſbelieve it. But if their unbelief in ſuch a caſe, inſtead of making the danger leſs, only aggravates their guilt, and heightens their danger, and puts them off from taking the propereſt methods for avoiding it, the folly of ſuch a conduct is very apparent. Chriſtianity profeſſes to direct to a true and certain way, both of avoiding that future puniſhment, and of obtaining the greateſt glory and felicity that can poſſibly be propoſed to the human mind. But if theſe gentlemen will rather venture to expoſe themſelves to that future puniſhment, than endeavour to prevent it by a true repentance, and by abandoning their vicious courſes; and if they will chooſe rather to forfeit the hopes of everlaſting happineſs, than go on in that uniform courſe of piety and virtue that leads to it; there is no remedy: they muſt take the conſequences. But certainly the bare poſſibility of the *wrath to come* is ſo dreadful a thing, that a wiſe man would not run the hazard of it for a few tranſient vicious gratifications. For what one of their own admired authors ſays, though in a ſneering way, is a ſober and momentous truth, and what the reaſon of mankind cannot but approve, that " where there is a hell " on the other ſide, it is but natural prudence to take readily to " the ſafeſt ſide ‡."

I ſhall conclude this letter with taking notice of a propoſal, made by a deiſtical writer, for putting an end to the important controverſy between the Chriſtians and the deiſts. " If thoſe " learned gentlemen," ſays he, " that are the directors of others,

* See two Letters from a Deiſt to his friend, p. 17. 19, cited by Dr. Waterland in his preface to the firſt part of Script. Vind.

† Lord Bolingbroke's Letters on the Study and Uſe of Hiſtory, vol. ii. p. 221.

‡ *Chriſtianity not founded on Argument*, p. 88.

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" will chooſe to give up ſpeculative principles, and an hiſtorical " faith, and inſiſt only on that practice which will recommend " men in every religion to the favour of God, the good-will " of men, and peace of their own conſcience, and own, that the " whole of the Chriſtian religion, which is worth contending " for, are all relative and ſocial virtues, then the contention be- " tween the Chriſtians and deiſts will drop *." So then we ſee here upon what terms the deiſts are willing to be at peace with the Chriſtian divines. They muſt give up *ſpeculative principles*, and an *hiſtorical faith*. By an *hiſtorical faith*, in theſe gentlemen's language, muſt be underſtood faith in Jeſus Chriſt, a belief of what is related in the goſpels concerning him, concerning his perſon, miniſtry, miracles, ſufferings, reſurrection, aſcenſion; and all this muſt be given up as of no conſequence to mankind at all. And *ſpeculative principles* muſt alſo be abandoned. And what is intended by theſe, and how far this demand is to extend, it is hard to know. With ſome that call themſelves deiſts, the moſt important principles of natural religion, the belief of a providence, of the immortality of the ſoul, and a ſtate of future judgment and retribution, are looked upon to be needleſs ſpeculations, and either denied, or treated as matters of doubtful diſputation. But let us ſuppoſe that no ſtreſs is to be laid upon any doctrines or principles at all, and that practice alone is to be inſiſted on, though ſome principles ſeem to lie at the foundation of a good and virtuous practice, yet ſtill it will be found no eaſy matter for the Chriſtian and deiſt to agree what that practice is which is to be regarded as neceſſary. This writer would have the divines own, that *the whole of the Chriſtian religion, which is worth contending for, are all relative and ſocial virtues*. Here is not a word ſaid of the duties of piety and devotion, of love, reverence, adoration, ſubmiſſion, affiance, and reſignation towards the ſupreme Being, or of prayer, confeſſion of ſins, thankſgiving, praiſe, and the outward acts of religious homage which we owe to God. Yet this is an important part of our duty, on which Chriſtianity, and even right reaſon itſelf, teacheth us to lay a great ſtreſs; though it is treated by many among the deiſts as a thing of ſmall conſequence. Nor

* *Reſurrection of Jeſus conſidered*, p. 83.

is there any thing here ſaid of the duties of ſelf-government, chaſtity, purity, humility, temperance, and the due regulation of our appetites and paſſions. And when this comes to be explained, there is likely to be a wide difference between the Chriſtians and deiſts, as to the particulars included in this part of our duty. It is very probable, that theſe gentlemen will plead for allowing much greater liberties, in indulging their ſenſual appetites and paſſions, than is conſiſtent with the morals of the goſpel, and with that purity of heart and life which Chriſtianity requireth. And even as to relative and ſocial virtues, in which this author makes the whole of religion to conſiſt, the deiſts have often objected againſt that forgiveneſs of injuries, that charity and benevolence, even towards our enemies themſelves, that returning good for evil, which the great author of our religion hath urged upon his diſciples, both by his doctrine and by his example. It is to be feared, upon the whole, that they will be as far from agreeing to the morals as to the doctrines of the goſpel; and that ſome of its laws and practical precepts ſtand more in their way, and create greater prejudices againſt it, than its myſteries themſelves, though it is a little more plauſible and decent to put the reaſon of their rejecting Chriſtianity upon the latter than upon the former.

This may help us to judge, whether there be any juſt ground for their pretences, as if the world were greatly obliged to them for endeavouring to take men off from uſeleſs ſpeculations, and teaching them to lay the whole ſtreſs upon practice. The laſt-mentioned author concludes his treatiſe againſt the reſurrection of Jeſus with declaring his hope, that it "will be of real "ſervice to religion, and make men's practice better, when they "ſhall find they have nothing elſe to depend upon for happineſs "here and hereafter, but their own perſonal righteouſneſs, with "their love of wiſdom and truth *." And others of them have made the ſame boaſt, but very undeſervedly. For can the neceſſity of perſonal obedience and righteouſneſs be more expreſsly inſiſted upon than in the goſpel of Jeſus, or be bound upon us by ſtronger and more ſacred arguments? Do theſe gentlemen pretend to teach more excellent morals than the Chriſtian reli-

* *Reſurrection of Jeſus conſidered*, p. 82.

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gion does, or to carry piety, charity, benevolence, purity of manners, and univerſal righteouſneſs, to a nobler height, or to enforce the practice of it by more powerful and prevailing motives? Or, do they propoſe to make men's practice better, by leaving them at large, without any expreſs divine precepts determining the particulars of their duty, and by taking away the glorious hopes and promiſes of the goſpel, which are deſigned to animate us to obedience, and the awful threatenings which are there denounced againſt vice and wickedneſs?

But enough has been ſaid of theſe gentlemen and their pretences; and I intended here, as a proper concluſion of this work, to have given a ſummary repreſentation of the principal arguments and evidences for the truth and divinity of the Chriſtian revelation. But as you will probably think this letter to be already of ſufficient length, I chooſe to reſerve it for the ſubject of my next.

I am yours, &c.

J. LELAND.

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LETTER XXXVI.

An extraordinary Revelation from God to Mankind poſſible to be given—The Propriety and Uſefulneſs of ſuch a Revelation ſhewn—Thoſe to whom it is made known indiſpenſably obliged to embrace it—The Marks and Evidences by which we may be ſatisfied that ſuch a Revelation is really given, viz. *when the Revelation itſelf is of an excellent Nature and Tendency, and when it is accompanied by the moſt extraordinary divine Atteſtations, eſpecially Miracles and Prophecy—The Proof from Miracles vindicated—Confeſſion of ſome of the Deiſts themſelves to this Purpoſe—The Revelation contained in the Holy Scriptures confirmed by a Series of the moſt extraordinary Works, which manifeſtly argued a divine Interpoſition—The Nature of the Revelation itſelf conſidered—Diſtinguiſhed into three Periods, under each of which the Religion, for Subſtance, the ſame—Firſt, The Patriarchal Religion—The Second relates to the Moſaical Diſpenſation—The Third, which was the Perfection of all the reſt, is the Chriſtian Revelation—The God-like Character of its Author—The Nature and Tendency of the Religion itſelf particularly conſidered, and ſhewn to be worthy of God—It could not be the Effect either of Impoſture or Enthuſiaſm, and therefore muſt be of divine Original—The Chriſtian Scheme of the Mediator wiſe and excellent—The Difficulties attending it, no juſt Objection againſt Chriſtianity—The Concluſion.*

SIR,

HAVING finiſhed the account of the *deiſtical writers*, it will not be improper to lay together ſome conſiderations, relating to the reaſons we have to believe that Chriſtianity is a true revelation from God, and that therefore they to whom it is publiſhed and made known are under indiſpenſable obligations to believe and embrace it.

With regard to revelation in general, the firſt thing that comes to be conſidered, is the poſſibility of it. That God can, if

if he thinks fit, make extraordinary diſcoveries of his will, and communicate important truths to one or more men, to be by them communicated to others in his name, cannot be denied with the leaſt appearance of reaſon. For upon what foundation can any man go, in pretending that this is impoſſible? Is there any thing in it which implieth a contradiction either to the nature of God or man? This cannot be pretended, nor has any man attempted to ſhew that it involveth a contradiction. Accordingly, the poſſibility of a revelation has been generally acknowledged by thoſe who believe the exiſtence of God and a providence, nor do I ſee how any man that acknowledgeth a God and a providence can conſiſtently deny it.

And as the poſſibility of God's making an extraordinary revelation of his will to mankind muſt be acknowledged, ſo the propriety of it, or that it is worthy of God to grant ſuch a revelation, ſuppoſing, which hath been unanſwerably proved to have been the caſe in fact, mankind to have been ſunk into a ſtate of great darkneſs and corruption in matters of religion and morals; and that if he ſhould grant ſuch a revelation, for guiding men into the knowledge of important truths, or for enforcing their duty upon them, it would be a ſignal inſtance of the divine wiſdom and goodneſs, cannot be reaſonably conteſted. And indeed, this is no more than what ſome of the deiſts themſelves have thought fit to acknowledge. The *Moral Philoſopher* expreſsly owns it, and a remarkable paſſage from Mr. Chubb to the ſame purpoſe was cited in my thirteenth letter, vol. i.

It greatly ſtrengthens this, when it is conſidered, that ſeveral things there are of great importance to mankind to know, particularly concerning the attributes and providence of God; the moſt acceptable way of worſhipping him; the extent of the duty we owe him, and the methods of his dealings towards his offending creatures; how far and upon what terms he will pardon their iniquities, and receive them to his grace and favour; what rewards it will pleaſe him to confer upon thoſe that ſerve him in ſincerity, though their obedience is mixed with infirmities and defects; and what puniſhment he will inflict upon obſtinate preſumptuous tranſgreſſors: I ſay, there are ſeveral things, with reſpect to theſe and ſuch like matters, which as they relate to things inviſible, or things future, and which depend upon God's

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moſt wiſe counſels, of which, if left to ourſelves, we cannot pretend to be competent judges, we could not have a clear and full aſſurance of by the mere light of our own unaſſiſted reaſon. It ſeems evident therefore that mankind ſtood in great need of an extraordinary revelation from God, and that this would be of the moſt ſignal advantage. And though it cannot without great raſhneſs be pretended, that God is abſolutely obliged to give this advantage to any, or that, if he gives it to any, he is obliged to give it equally to all men, ſince it is manifeſt in fact that in the courſe of his providence much greater advantages are given to ſome than to others, with reſpect to the means of religious and moral improvement; yet it is reaſonable to conclude, that he hath not left all mankind at all times entirely deſtitute of an aſſiſtance of ſuch great conſequence and ſo much wanted. This affordeth a ſtrong preſumption, that God hath at ſome time or other made diſcoveries of his will to mankind in a way of extraordinary revelation, additional to the common light of nature.

It is alſo manifeſt, that ſuppoſing ſuch a revelation to have been really given from God, and that men have ſufficient evidence to convince them that it was from God, thoſe to whom this revelation is made known, are indiſpenſably obliged to receive and embrace it. This every man muſt acknowledge, who hath juſt notions of the Deity, or that God is the moral governor of the world, and hath a right to give laws to his creatures, and to require obedience to thoſe laws. And it were the greateſt abſurdity to ſuppoſe, that men may innocently reject what they have good reaſon to regard as the ſignifications of the divine will, made to them for this purpoſe, that they ſhould believe and obey them.

Theſe are principles which cannot juſtly be conteſted; the grand queſtion then is, whether any ſufficient proofs or evidences can be produced, that ſuch a revelation hath been really given, and what thoſe proofs and evidences are. Some there are who ſeem not willing to allow that any perſons, but thoſe to whom the revelation is immediately made, can have ſufficient evidence or proof to ſatisfy them that it is a true revelation from God. This is what Lord Herbert inſiſteth upon in his book *De Veritate*, and in ſeveral parts of his other works, where he makes it a neceſſary condition of a man's having a certain knowledge of

of a divine revelation, that it be made immediately to himſelf, and that he ſhould feel a divine afflatus in the reception of it. In this his Lordſhip has been followed by other writers that have appeared in the ſame cauſe. According to this ſcheme, it is vain for thoſe that have received a revelation from God to offer to produce any proofs of their divine miſſion, ſince no proofs or evidences can be offered that will be ſufficient, except every one of thoſe to whom they impart this have another particular revelation to aſſure them of it. This is in effect to pronounce, that ſuppoſing God to have communicated to any perſon or perſons extraordinary diſcoveries of his will, to be by them communicated for the uſe and inſtruction of mankind; it is abſolutely out of his power to furniſh them with ſuch credentials of their divine miſſion as may make it reaſonable for others to receive the doctrines and laws delivered by ſuch perſons in his name as of divine authority. But ſuch an aſſertion cannot be excuſed from great raſhneſs and arrogance, and is a moſt unwarrantable limitation of the divine power and wiſdom. It will indeed be readily allowed, that ſuppoſing perſons to declare with ever ſo great confidence that they are extraordinarily ſent of God, we are not to receive their bare word for a proof of it; and though they themſelves ſhould be firmly perſuaded of the truth and divinity of the revelation made immediately to them, this their perſuaſion is not a ſufficient warrant for others to receive that revelation as true and divine, except ſome farther proofs and evidences are given. And it is reaſonable to believe, that in that caſe, if God hath ſent perſons, and extraordinarily inſpired them to deliver doctrines and laws of great importance to mankind in his name, he will furniſh them with ſuch proofs and evidences as may be a ſufficient ground to thoſe to whom this revelation is not immediately made, to receive thoſe doctrines and laws as of divine authority. And here in judging of theſe, it muſt be acknowledged, that great care and caution is neceſſary, ſince it cannot be denied that there have been falſe pretences to revelation, the effects of enthuſiaſm or impoſture, which have given riſe to impoſitions that have been of ill conſequence to mankind. And though that is not a juſt reaſon for rejecting all revelation at once, as falſe or uncertain, yet it is a very good reaſon for making a very careful inquiry into the evidences that are produced

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for any pretended revelation. And with regard to this it may be obſerved, that where perſons pretending to bring a ſyſtem of doctrines and laws, which they profeſs to have received by revelation from God, have had their divine miſſion confirmed by a ſeries of the moſt extraordinary works, bearing the illuſtrious characters of a divine interpoſition, and which they have been enabled to perform in declared atteſtation of it; eſpecially, if they have been enabled alſo to make expreſs predictions in the name of God, concerning things future, which no human ſagacity could foreſee; and if at the ſame time the revelation itſelf appeareth to be of a moſt excellent tendency, manifeſtly conducive to the glory of God, and to the good of mankind, and to the promoting the intereſt of important truth, righteouſneſs, and virtue in the world, and thereby anſwering the main ends of all religion; there ſeems in that caſe to be ſufficient evidence to produce a reaſonable conviction, that this is a revelation from God, and conſequently to juſtify and demand our receiving and ſubmitting to it as of divine authority. For in this caſe, there ſeemeth to be as much evidence given to ſatisfy an honeſt and impartial inquirer as could be reaſonably expected or deſired, ſuppoſing a revelation really given. And that this hath actually been the caſe with regard to the revelation contained in the Holy Scriptures, the advocates for Chriſtianity have ſet themſelves to ſhew, with great force of reaſon and argument.

With regard to the external atteſtations given to the truth and divinity of the Scripture-revelation, there is ſcarce any thing in which the deiſtical writers have been more generally agreed than in bending their force againſt the proof from miracles. The methods they have taken to this purpoſe have been various: ſometimes they have gone ſo far as to pretend to prove, that miracles are abſolutely impoſſible; at other times that they are needleſs and uſeleſs, and are incapable of ſhewing the divine miſſion of perſons, or truth of doctrines, becauſe there is no connexion between power and truth. But though it will be readily acknowledged, that power and truth are diſtinct ideas, this does by no means prove, that the former can in no caſe give atteſtation to the latter: for if power be exerted in ſuch a way as to manifeſt an extraordinary divine interpoſition in favour of a perſon profeſſing to bring doctrines and laws from God to mankind,

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and be appealed to for that purpoſe, in ſuch a caſe power ſo exerted may give an atteſtation to the truth and authority of thoſe doctrines and laws. Some of the deiſts themſelves are ſo ſenſible of this, that, after all their pretences, they are obliged to make acknowledgments with regard to the uſe of miracles that are of no ſmall diſſervice to their cauſe. They acknowledge that they may be of uſe to excite and engage attention to doctrines and laws; which ſuppoſes them to carry ſomething in them of the nature of an atteſtation or proof, ſince otherwiſe no more regard ought to be paid to doctrines or laws on the account of miracles, than if they were not attended with miracles at all. The *Moral Philoſopher* owns, that "miracles, eſpecially if "wrought for the good of mankind, are perhaps the moſt ef-"fectual means of removing prejudices, and procuring attention "to what is delivered." Mr. Collins goes ſo far as to acknowledge, that miracles, when done in proof of doctrines and precepts that are conſiſtent with reaſon, and for the honour of God and the good of mankind, ought to determine men to believe and receive them; and that Chriſt's miracles might have been ſufficient, if he had not appealed to prophecy, and laid the principal ſtreſs of the proof of his divine miſſion upon it, as this writer pretends he did*. Mr. Woolſton ſays, "I believe it "will be granted on all hands, that the reſtoring a perſon in-"diſputably dead to life is a ſtupendous miracle, and that two or "three ſuch miracles, well atteſted and credibly reported, are "enough to conciliate the belief, that the author of them was a "divine agent, and inveſted with the power of God†." And Spinoſa is ſaid to have declared, that if he could believe that the reſurrection of Lazarus was really wrought as it is related, he would give up his ſyſtem.

That God can, if he thinketh fit, alter or ſuſpend the courſe of natural cauſes in particular inſtances, muſt be allowed by all who acknowledge that he is the Lord of nature, and the Sovereign of the univerſe. And that it may be agreeable to his wiſdom to do ſo on ſome extraordinary occaſions, may appear from this conſideration, that ſuch interpoſitions may be of uſe to awaken

* *Scheme of Literal Prophecy*, p. 321, 322.

† Fifth Diſcourſe on Miracles, p. 3.

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in men a ſenſe of a governing providence, and to convince them that the courſe of nature is not a fatal ſeries of blind neceſſary cauſes, but under the regulation of a moſt wiſe and free, as well as powerful mind; which, as it hath very properly appointed that things ſhould ordinarily go on in an uniform courſe according to eſtabliſhed laws, ſo it can alter or over-rule, interrupt or ſuſpend, the effect and influence of natural cauſes, and deviate from the uſual courſe of things on ſpecial occaſions for valuable purpoſes: and ſuch a valuable purpoſe it would be for providence to interpoſe for giving an illuſtrious atteſtation to doctrines and laws of great importance to mankind, and to the divine miſſion of perſons ſent to inſtruct them in religion, to recover them from great errors and corruptions, and guide them to a true knowledge, obedience, and adoration of the deity, and to a holy and virtuous practice. Extraordinary miraculous interpoſitions in ſuch a caſe would anſwer an excellent end, and be worthy of the divine wiſdom and goodneſs. This ſeems to be a way of God's giving his teſtimony the moſt powerful and ſtriking that can be, and which is peculiarly fitted for engaging mankind to receive and ſubmit to ſuch a revelation as of divine authority. And thus it was with regard to the miracles wrought at the firſt eſtabliſhment of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian diſpenſations. There was not merely a ſingle extraordinary event or two, in which caſe it might have been ſuppoſed that it was only ſome ſtrange thing that had happened, of which no account can be given, and from which nothing certain can be concluded; but there was a marvellous ſucceſſion and concurrence of the moſt extraordinary facts, done in the moſt open public manner, in a great number of inſtances, and for a ſeries of years together, all viſibly tending to the ſame important end, *viz.* to give atteſtation to the divine authority of a ſyſtem of doctrines and laws delivered in the name of God himſelf. And theſe facts were of ſuch a nature, ſo manifeſtly tranſcending all human power, and which bore ſuch evident marks of divine interpoſition, that, taken together, they form as ſtrong an evidence as could be reaſonably expected and deſired. And I believe few, if any, can be found, who are really perſuaded of the truth of thoſe facts, and do not alſo acknowledge the divine original and authority of the revelation thus atteſted and confirmed. And ſuppoſing ſuch miraculous atteſtations to

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have been really given, at the firſt promulgation and eſtabliſhment of a ſyſtem of doctrines and laws, which is declared to have come from God; this is ſufficient to eſtabliſh its authority, not only at that time, but to ſucceeding ages, provided that the accounts of thoſe doctrines and laws, and of the extraordinary facts whereby they were atteſted, were faithfully tranſmitted, in a manner which may be ſafely depended upon. And that this has been the caſe with regard to the Moſaic and Chriſtian revelation, hath been often clearly ſhewn.

With regard to the former, never were there in the world facts of a more public nature, than thoſe by which the Moſaical law was atteſted. They were not merely things done in a way of ſecret intercourſe and communication with the Deity, in which caſe there might have been ſome ſuſpicion of impoſture, but they were facts done openly in the view of all the people, who, let us ſuppoſe them ever ſo ſtupid, could not poſſibly have been made to believe that all theſe things happened in their own ſight, and that they themſelves had been witneſſes to them, if they had not been ſo. Nor can it be ſuppoſed that Moſes, who was certainly a wiſe man, would have attempted ſo wild a thing as to have appealed to the people, as he does all along, for the truth of thoſe facts, and to have put the authority of his laws upon them, if at the ſame time they all knew them to be falſe. If therefore Moſes publiſhed thoſe facts himſelf to all the people, the facts were true. And that he did himſelf publiſh thoſe facts, we have the ſame proof which we have that he gave the laws. And that he gave the laws to the people of Iſrael, as the whole nation who were governed by thoſe laws have conſtantly affirmed, no reaſonable man can deny. The accounts of the facts are ſo interwoven with the very body of the laws, that they cannot be ſeparated. Some of the principal motives to engage the people to the obſervance of thoſe laws are taken from thoſe facts. Many of the laws were peculiarly deſigned to preſerve the remembrance of thoſe facts. And this was the profeſſed end of the inſtitution of ſome of their moſt ſolemn ſacred rites, which were to be conſtantly obſerved by the whole nation, in every age from the beginning of their policy. Theſe laws and facts were not tranſmitted merely by oral tradition, which in many caſes is a very uncertain conveyance, but were immediately committed to writing. And

thoſe writings were not kept ſecret, in the hands of a few, but, from the time they were firſt written, were publiſhed to the people, who were commanded in the name of God to acquaint themſelves with thoſe laws and facts, and to teach them diligently to their children, and were aſſured that, upon their preſerving and keeping them, their proſperity and happineſs, public and private, and all their privileges, depended. Accordingly, in all the remaining writings of that nation, whether of an hiſtorical, moral, or devotional kind, there is a conſtant reference not only to the laws, as having been originally given by Moſes in the name of God to their nation, but to the wonderful facts that were done in atteſtation to thoſe laws, as of undoubted credit, and as things univerſally known and acknowledged among them. If thoſe facts had been only mentioned in a few paſſages, it might poſſibly be pretended, that the accounts of them were interpolations, afterwards inſerted in theſe writings. But as the caſe is circumſtanced, there is no room for this pretence. The facts are repeated and referred to on ſo many different occaſions, that it appears with the utmoſt evidence, that thoſe facts have been all along known and acknowledged, and the remembrance of them conſtantly kept up among that people in all ages. Their peculiar conſtitution, whereby they were ſo remarkably diſtinguiſhed from all other nations, was plainly founded upon the truth and authority of thoſe facts, nor could have been eſtabliſhed without them.

To all which it may be added, that the very quality of the writings which contain an account of thoſe facts, or in which they are referred to as of undoubted truth, derives no ſmall credit to them. A profound veneration for the Deity every-where appears, together with a remarkable unaffected ſimplicity and integrity, and an impartial love of truth. It cannot reaſonably be pretended, that they were forged to humour and flatter their nation; for with the utmoſt freedom they relate things greatly to the diſadvantage of their national character. They repreſent, impartially and without diſguiſe, their frequent defections from their law, their diſobedience and ingratitude to God for all his benefits, and the great puniſhments inflicted upon them on that account. Beſides which it is to be obſerved, that there are in thoſe writings clear and expreſs predictions of future extraordinary events, which

which no human ſagacity could foreſee, and which yet have been moſt remarkably accompliſhed. And particularly it is there moſt expreſsly foretold, that the people of Iſrael, for whom God had done ſuch great things, ſhould yet be diſtinguiſhed with judgments and calamities above all other nations; that they ſhould be diſperſed all over the face of the earth, expoſed to univerſal obloquy, and yet not be utterly loſt or deſtroyed, but ſtill preſerved as a diſtinct people; which we ſee moſt ſignally verified at this day: A thing ſo wonderful, taken in all its circumſtances, that this people may be regarded as a living continued monument of the truth of their own ancient ſacred writings, and of the extraordinary facts there recorded.

As to the extraordinary and miraculous facts whereby the divine original and authority of the Chriſtian revelation was atteſted and confirmed, never were there any facts that had clearer and more convincing evidence attending them. They were many in number, done for the moſt part in the moſt public manner, and for a ſeries of years together, and produced the moſt wonderful effects, in bringing over vaſt numbers both of Jews and Gentiles, in the very age in which the facts were done, and when they had the beſt opportunity of knowing the truth of thoſe facts, to receive a crucified Jeſus as their Saviour and their Lord, than which nothing could be imagined more contrary to the prejudices which then univerſally obtained. The accounts of theſe facts, as well as of the pure and excellent laws and doctrines in atteſtation of which they were wrought, were publiſhed in the very age in which theſe laws were delivered and thoſe facts were done, and by perſons who were perfectly acquainted with the things they relate. And the facts themſelves were of ſuch a nature, that they could not be deceived in them themſelves, ſuppoſing they had their ſenſes. Nor had they any temptation or intereſt to put them upon endeavouring to impoſe upon others, by giving falſe accounts of thoſe facts. For, beſides that the falſehood of thoſe accounts muſt, as the caſe was circumſtanced, have been immediately detected and expoſed, the religion which was confirmed by thoſe facts was in many things directly contrary to thoſe notions and prejudices with which their own minds had been moſt ſtrongly prepoſſeſſed, and which nothing leſs than the undeniable evidence they had of thoſe facts was able to over-

come. And it ſtrengthens this when it is conſidered, that this religion, inſtead of promiſing them any worldly advantages, expoſed them to the moſt cruel reproaches, perſecutions, and ſufferings, and to whatever is moſt grievous to human nature, which they endured with an amazing conſtancy, perſiſting in their teſtimony even to death. To which it may be added, that if we examine the writings themſelves, we ſhall find in them all the characters of genuine purity, integrity, undiſguiſed ſimplicity, and an impartial regard to truth, that any writings can poſſibly have. And the whole ſcheme of religion there laid down is uniformly directed to the glory of God, and the good of mankind, and to ſerve the cauſe of virtue and righteouſneſs in the world. Accordingly theſe writings were immediately received with great veneration in the very age in which they were firſt written and publiſhed, and from that time regarded as of undoubted truth and of divine authority. They were ſoon ſpread far and wide, read in the public religious aſſemblies of Chriſtians, tranſlated into various languages, and they have been conſtantly cited by great numbers of writers in every age ſince, whoſe works are ſtill extant, many of whom have not only quoted particular paſſages, but have tranſcribed large portions of them into their writings, by which it inconteſtably appears, that they were the ſame, both with regard to the accounts of doctrines and facts, that are now in our hands. They have been on numberleſs occaſions appealed to by perſons of different ſects, parties, and opinions in religion; ſo that it would not have been in the power of any party of men, if they had been ſo diſpoſed, to have deſtroyed or corrupted all the copies, or to have made a general alteration in the ſcheme of religion there taught, or in the accounts of the facts there recorded. And it is evident in fact, that no ſuch alterations have been made, ſince religion there appeareth in its primitive ſimplicity, as it was in the firſt age of the Chriſtian church, without any of the corruptions of latter ages. And, upon the whole, it may upon good grounds be affirmed, that the proofs which are brought to ſhew, that the ſcriptures are ſafely tranſmitted to us, are greater than can be produced for any other books in the world. This hath been often fully vindicated, and ſet in ſo clear a light, that the enemies of Chriſtianity have had no other way of avoiding the evidence, but by moſt abſurdly flying out (as hath been obſerved

ſerved before) into invectives againſt all hiſtorical evidence, and againſt the credit of all paſt facts whatſoever. It may therefore be juſtly ſaid, that no greater evidence of the truth of the extraordinary facts whereby Chriſtianity was atteſted, can reaſonably be deſired, except all theſe ſtupendous facts were to be done over again for our conviction. And if one man thinks he may juſtly demand this, another man hath an equal right to demand it, and ſo every man may demand it. And thoſe facts muſt be repeated in every age, in every nation, and in the ſight of every ſingle perſon, which would be the moſt abſurd and unreaſonable thing in the world, and the moſt unworthy of the divine wiſdom.

This may ſuffice with regard to the extraordinary atteſtations given to the revelation contained in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Teſtament, and which exhibit illuſtrious convincing proofs of its divine original. It will be proper next to conſider the nature and excellence of the revelation itſelf, with the ſcheme of religion there delivered to us; and it will appear, upon the moſt impartial examination, to be worthy of God, of a moſt admirable tendency, and well fitted to anſwer the important ends for which we might ſuppoſe a revelation to have been given to mankind.

That we may have a juſter notion of the religion held forth to us in the Holy Scriptures, it is proper to take a brief view of it from the beginning. The ſacred volume opens with that which lies at the foundation of religion, an account of God's having created the world, which is there deſcribed in a plain and familiar manner, accommodated to the capacities of the people, and with a noble ſimplicity; as is alſo the original formation of man, who is repreſented as having been formed after the divine image, inveſted with a dominion over the inferior creation, with a reſervation of the homage he himſelf owed to God as his ſovereign Lord, and conſtituted in a paradiſaical ſtate, a happy ſtate of purity and innocence. There is nothing in this but what is agreeable to right reaſon, as well as to the moſt ancient traditions that have obtained among the nations. We are farther there informed, that man fell from that ſtate by ſinning againſt his maker; and that ſin brought death into the world, and all the evils and miſeries to which the human race is now obnoxi-

ous: but that the merciful parent of our being, in his great goodneſs and compaſſion, was pleaſed to make ſuch revelations and diſcoveries of his grace and mercy, as laid a proper foundation for the faith and hope of his offending creatures, and for the exerciſe of religion towards him. Accordingly, the religion delivered in the Scriptures is the religion of man in his lapſed ſtate; and any one that impartially and carefully conſiders it, will find one ſcheme of religion, ſubſtantially the ſame, carried all along through the whole, till it was brought to its full perfection and accompliſhment by Jeſus Chriſt.

This religion may be conſidered principally under three periods. The firſt is the religion of the patriarchal times, which conſiſted in the pure adoration of the Deity, free from idolatry, in a firm belief of his univerſal and particular providence, a hope of his pardoning mercy towards penitent ſinners, and a confiding in him as the great rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him; which reward they looked for, not merely in this preſent world, but in a future ſtate: for we are told, that they *ſought a better country, that is, an heavenly.* Theſe were the main principles of their religion, together with a ſtrong ſenſe of their obligation to the practice of piety, virtue, and univerſal righteouſneſs. To which it may be added, that there ſeems to have been a hope and expectation from the beginning, originally founded on a divine promiſe, of a great Saviour, who was to redeem mankind from the miſeries and ruin to which they were expoſed, and through whom God was to make the fulleſt diſcoveries and exhibitions of his grace and mercy towards the human race, and to raiſe them to a high degree of glory and felicity. As to the external rites of religion then made uſe of, the moſt ancient rite of which we have any account, is that of offering ſacrifice to God: and its having ſo early and univerſally obtained among all nations, and in the moſt ancient times, as a ſacred rite of religion, can ſcarce be otherwiſe accounted for, than by ſuppoſing it to have been a part of the primitive religion, originally enjoined by divine appointment to the firſt anceſtors of the human race, and from them tranſmitted to their deſcendants. This patriarchal religion, as it has been deſcribed, ſeems to have been the religion of Adam after his fall, of Abel, Seth, Enoch, and the antediluvian patriarchs; and afterwards of Noah, the ſecond

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parent of mankind, and of the ſeveral heads of families derived from him, who probably carried it into their ſeveral diſperſions. But, above all, this religion was ſignally exemplified in Abraham, who was illuſtrious for his faith, piety, and righteouſneſs, and whom God was pleaſed to favour with ſpecial diſcoveries of his will. From him deſcended many great nations, among whom this religion, in its main principles, ſeems to have been preſerved, of which there are noble remains in the book of Job. There were alſo remarkable veſtiges of it for a long time preſerved among ſeveral other nations; and indeed the belief of one ſupreme God, of a providence, a hope of pardoning mercy, a ſenſe of the obligations of piety and virtue, and of the acceptance and reward of ſincere obedience, and the expectation of a future ſtate, were never entirely extinguiſhed. And whoſoever among the Gentiles at any time, or in any nation, was a fearer of God, and a worker of righteouſneſs, might be juſtly regarded as of the ancient patriarchal religion, and was favourably accepted with God. But in proceſs of time the nations became generally depraved, ſunk into a deplorable darkneſs and corruption, and the great principles of religion were in a great meaſure covered and overwhelmed with an amazing load of ſuperſtitions, idolatries, and corruptions of all kinds.

The ſecond view of religion, as ſet before us in the Scriptures, is, that which relates to the Moſaical diſpenſation. This was really and eſſentially the ſame religion, for ſubſtance, which was profeſſed and practiſed in the ancient patriarchal times, with the addition of a ſpecial covenant made with a particular people, among whom God was pleaſed, for wiſe ends, to erect a ſacred polity, and to whom he gave a revelation of his will, which was committed to writing as the ſafeſt conveyance; whereas religion had been hitherto preſerved chiefly by tradition, which was more eaſily maintained during the long lives of men in the firſt ages. The ſpecial covenant was no ways inconſiſtent with God's univerſal providence and goodneſs towards mankind; nor did it in any degree vacate or infringe the ancient primitive religion which had obtained from the beginning, but was deſigned to be ſubſervient to the great ends of it, and to preſerve it from being utterly depraved and extinguiſhed. The principal end of that polity, and the main view to which it was all directed, was to reſtore

and preſerve the true worſhip and adoration of the one living and true God, and of him only, in oppoſition to that polytheiſm and idolatry which began then to ſpread generally through the nations; and to engage thoſe to whom it was made known, to the practice of piety, virtue, and righteouſneſs, by giving them holy and excellent laws, expreſsly preſcribing the particulars of their duty, and enforced by the ſanctions of a divine authority, and by promiſes and threatenings in the name of God. And alſo to keep up the hope and expectation of the Redeemer, who had been promiſed from the beginning, and to prepare men for that moſt perfect and complete diſpenſation of religion, which he was to introduce. And whoſoever impartially examines that conſtitution muſt be obliged to acknowledge, that it was admirably fitted to anſwer theſe important ends. The laws of Moſes, and the ſacred writings of the Old Teſtament, teach us to form the juſteſt and nobleſt notions of God, as having created all things by his power, as preſerving and governing all things by his providence, as poſſeſſed of all poſſible perfections; infinitely powerful, wiſe, and good, holy, juſt, and true, a lover of righteouſneſs, a hater of ſin and wickedneſs; omnipreſent, omniſcient; to whom we owe the higheſt love, the profoundeſt reverence, the moſt abſolute ſubmiſſion and reſignation, and the moſt ſteady dependence. There is a ſtrain of unequalled piety every-where running through thoſe ſacred writings. We are there taught to refer all to God, to do every thing we do as in his preſence, and in a ſubordination to his glory. We have there alſo excellent precepts given us with regard to the duties we owe to our fellow-creatures. All ſocial duties may be regarded as comprehended in that admirable precept of the law, *Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf.* A juſt, a kind, and benevolent conduct is preſcribed, and not only are all injurious actions forbidden in the ſtrongeſt manner, but even all inordinate deſires and covetings after what belongeth to others, which lie at the foundation of all the injuſtice men are guilty of towards their neighbours. The ten commandments, which contain a comprehenſive ſummary of the moral precepts, were, that they might make the greater impreſſion, delivered with the greateſt majeſty and ſolemnity that can be conceived. There was indeed a variety of ritual injunctions preſcribed under that conſtitution, the reaſons of all which cannot

not be clearly aſſigned at this diſtance. But ſome of them were manifeſtly intended in oppoſition to the rites of the neighbouring nations, and with a view to preſerve them as a diſtinct people, and keep them free from the infections of their idolatries. Others of their rites were inſtituted to keep up the memorials of the ſignal and extraordinary acts of divine providence towards them, eſpecially thoſe by which their law had been confirmed and eſtabliſhed. And ſome of them ſeem to have been originally deſigned as types and prefigurations of good things to come, under that more perfect diſpenſation which was to ſucceed. The rite of ſacrificing, which had been in uſe from the moſt ancient times, and began to be greatly perverted and abuſed among the nations, was brought under diſtinct regulations, and only to be performed to the honour of the one true God, the great Creator and Lord of the univerſe. Polytheiſm and the worſhip of inferior deities were forbidden; no obſcene or filthy rites, no unnatural rigours or auſterities, no human ſacrifices or cruel oblations, made a part of their religion, as among many other nations. And the abſolute neceſſity of virtue and righteouſneſs, in order to their acceptance with God, was ſtrongly inculcated, and on this they were directed to lay the principal ſtreſs, and not merely on external rites or forms. This conſtitution is repreſented as having been introduced and eſtabliſhed with the moſt amazing demonſtrations and diſplays of God's ſupreme dominion and glorious majeſty, and with a viſible triumph over idolatry in its proper ſeat (for ſo Egypt and Canaan may be looked upon to have been), and with the moſt awful manifeſtations of God's juſt diſpleaſure againſt thoſe abominable vices as well as idolatries, which were then making a great progreſs in the world, and of which the Canaanites were remarkably guilty.

What is eſpecially obſervable is, that under that conſtitution there was a ſucceſſion of prophets, who were ſent to reclaim the people from the idolatries and corruptions into which they had fallen, and to enforce upon them the practice of real religion and righteouſneſs. Their writings every-where abound with the ſublimeſt deſcriptions and repreſentations of the Deity; they diſcover a pure and ardent zeal for the glory of God, a noble impartial deteſtation againſt vice and wickedneſs, and a deep and earneſt concern for promoting the intereſts of ſubſtantial piety

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and virtue, and taking men off from a too great dependence on outward forms and ritual obſervances. And what is peculiarly remarkable, they contain the moſt illuſtrious predictions of future events, many of them clear, expreſs, and circumſtantial, relating to nations, both of their own and others, and to particular perſons. Some of which events were to take place in their own times, or ſoon after, and were moſt remarkably fulfilled; and others were removed to the diſtance of ſeveral ages from the time in which thoſe prophets lived and uttered their predictions, and, though abſolutely beyond the reach of any human ſagacity to foreſee, have alſo received their accompliſhment. This ſhews that they were extraordinarily inſpired by Him who alone can foretel future contingencies; and their prophecies gave a farther proof and atteſtation to the divine original of the Moſaic conſtitution, ſince they were deſigned to engage the people to the obſervance of the excellent laws that had been given them; and they were alſo intended to prepare them for expecting a more glorious diſpenſation, to be brought by a perſon of unparalleled dignity, whoſe coming they foretold, and whom they deſcribed by the moſt remarkable characters. Some of theſe prophets deſcribed him by one part of his office and undertaking, and ſome by another. They pointed to the tribe and family from which he was to ſpring, the time of his appearance, the place of his birth, the miracles he ſhould perform, the exemplary holineſs of his life, his great wiſdom and excellence as a teacher; they ſpoke in the higheſt terms of his divine dignity, and yet foretold that he was to undergo the moſt grievous humiliations and bitter ſufferings for the ſins of men; they teſtified not only his ſufferings, but the glories that ſhould follow; his wonderful exaltation, and the kingdom of righteouſneſs and truth which he was to erect and eſtabliſh; that the Jews would generally reject him, and that the Gentiles ſhould receive his law, and be ſharers of the benefits of his kingdom.

Accordingly the third period relates to that diſpenſation of religion which was brought by that glorious and divine perſon whom the prophets had foretold. This is properly the Chriſtian diſpenſation, which was deſigned and fitted for an univerſal extent, and in which, conſidered in its original purity, religion is brought to its higheſt perfection and nobleſt improvement. An admirable

admirable wiſdom, goodneſs, and purity, ſhone forth in the whole conduct and character of the great author of it. He came in the fulneſs of time, the time which had been pointed out in the prophetical writings. In him the ſeveral predictions relating to the extraordinary perſon that was to come were fulfilled, and the ſeveral characters by which he was deſcribed were wonderfully united, and in no other. He appeared, as was foretold concerning him, mean in his outward condition and circumſtances, and yet maintained in his whole conduct a dignity becoming his divine character. Many of his miracles were of ſuch a kind, and performed in ſuch a manner, as ſeemed to argue a dominion over nature, and its eſtabliſhed laws, and they were acts of great goodneſs as well as power. He went about doing good to the bodies and to the ſouls of men; and the admirable inſtructions he gave were delivered with a divine authority, and yet with great familiarity and condeſcenſion. And his own practice was every way ſuited to the excellence of his precepts. He exhibited the moſt finiſhed pattern of univerſal holineſs, of love to God, of zeal for the divine glory, of the moſt wonderful charity and benevolence towards mankind, of the moſt unparalleled ſelf-denial, of the moſt heavenly mind and life, of meekneſs and patience, humility and condeſcenſion. Never was there ſo perfect a character, ſo god-like, venerable, and amiable, ſo remote from that of an enthuſiaſt or an impoſtor. He himſelf moſt expreſsly foretold his own ſufferings, the cruel and ignominious death he was to undergo, his reſurrection from the dead on the third day, his aſcenſion into heaven, the dreadful judgments and calamities that ſhould be inflicted on the Jewiſh nation, and what ſeemed the moſt improbable thing in the world, the wonderful progreſs of his own goſpel from the ſmalleſt beginnings, notwithſtanding the perſecutions and difficulties he foretold it ſhould meet with. All this was moſt exactly fulfilled; he roſe again on the third day, and ſhewed himſelf alive to his diſciples after his paſſion by many infallible proofs, when their hopes were ſo ſunk, that they could hardly believe that he was riſen, till they could no longer doubt of it, without renouncing the teſtimony of all their ſenſes. He gave them commiſſion to go and preach his goſpel to all nations; and promiſed that, to enable them to do it with ſucceſs, they ſhould be endued with the moſt extraordinary powers and gifts

gifts of the Holy Ghoſt. This accordingly they did, and though deſtitute of all worldly advantages, without power, riches, intereſt, policy, learning, or eloquence, they went through the world, preaching up a crucified Jeſus, as the Saviour and Lord of men, and teaching the things which he had commanded them; and by the wonderful powers which they were inveſted with, and the evidences they produced of their divine miſſion, they prevailed, and ſpread the religion of Jeſus, as their great maſter had foretold, in the midſt of ſufferings and perſecutions, and in oppoſition to the reigning inveterate prejudices both of Jews and Gentiles.

If we examine the nature and tendency of the religion itſelf, which was taught by Chriſt, and by the apoſtles in his name, we ſhall find it to be worthy of God. It retaineth all the excellencies of the Old Teſtament revelation; for our Saviour came not to deſtroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them, and carry the ſcheme of religion there laid down to a ſtill higher degree of excellence. The idea given us of God, of his incomparable perfections, and his governing providence, as extending to all his creatures, particularly towards mankind, is the nobleſt that can be conceived, and the moſt proper to produce worthy affections and diſpoſitions towards him. Great care is eſpecially taken to inſtruct us to form juſt notions of God's illuſtrious moral excellencies, of his wiſdom, his faithfulneſs, and truth, his impartial juſtice, and righteouſneſs, and ſpotleſs purity; but, above all, of his goodneſs and love to mankind, of which the Goſpel contains and exhibits the moſt glorious and attractive diſcoveries and diſplays that were ever made to the world. The exceeding riches of the divine grace and mercy are repreſented in the moſt engaging manner. Pardon and ſalvation are freely offered upon the moſt gracious terms: the very chief of ſinners are invited, and the ſtrongeſt poſſible aſſurances given of God's readineſs to receive them, upon their ſincere repentance and reformation; and at the ſame time, to prevent an abuſe of this, the moſt ſtriking repreſentations are made of God's juſt wrath and diſpleaſure againſt thoſe that obſtinately go on in preſumptuous ſin and diſobedience. It is eſpecially the glory of the goſpel, that the great realities of an unſeen eternal world are there ſet in the moſt clear and open light;

light; there are clearer diſcoveries made, and far ſtronger aſſurances given, of that future life and immortality, than were ever given to mankind before.

As to the precepts of Chriſtianity, they are unqueſtionably holy and excellent. The pureſt morality is taught in all its juſt and noble extent, as taking in the whole of our duty towards God, our neighbours, and ourſelves.

As to piety towards God, the idea there given of it is venerable, amiable, and engaging; we are required to fear God, but it is not with a ſervile horror, ſuch as ſuperſtition inſpires, but with a filial reverence. We are directed and encouraged to addreſs ourſelves to him as our heavenly Father, through Jeſus Chriſt, the Son of his love, and in his name to offer up our prayers and praiſes, our confeſſions and thankſgivings, with the profoundeſt humility, becoming creatures deeply ſenſible of their own unworthineſs, and yet with an ingenuous affiance, hope, and joy. We are to yield the moſt unreſerved ſubmiſſion to God as our ſovereign Lord, our moſt wiſe and righteous Governor, and moſt gracious Benefactor; to reſign ourſelves to his diſpoſal, and acquieſce in his providential diſpenſations, as being perſuaded that he ordereth all things really for the beſt; to walk continually as in his ſight, and with a regard to his approbation, ſetting him before us as our great all-ſeeing witneſs and judge, our chiefeſt good and higheſt end. Above all, we are required to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and mind, and ſtrength, and to ſhew that we love him, by keeping his commandments, by aſpiring after a conformity to him in his imitable perfections, and by endeavouring, as far as we are able, to glorify him in the world. As to the external worſhip of God, according to the idea given of it in the New Teſtament, it is pure and ſpiritual, and hath a noble ſimplicity in it. The numerous rites of the Moſaical diſpenſation, which, though wiſely ſuited to that time and ſtate, were marks of the imperfection of that œconomy, are now aboliſhed. The ordinances of Chriſtianity, as preſcribed in the goſpel, are few in number, eaſy of obſervance, and noble in their uſe and ſignificancy.

Not only doth Chriſtianity give the moſt excellent directions as to the duty we more immediately owe to God, but a mighty ſtreſs is there laid upon ſocial duties and ſocial virtues, which it hath

hath a manifeſt tendency to promote and improve. The conſtant exerciſe of juſtice, and righteouſneſs, and fidelity, is moſt expreſsly enjoined; the rendering to all their dues, and a diligent diſcharge of the duties of our ſeveral ſtations and relations, is bound upon us, not merely by civil conſiderations, but as a neceſſary part of religion. But what ought eſpecially to recommend Chriſtianity is, that a true and extenſive benevolence is there carried to the nobleſt height; it ſtrengthens the natural ties of humanity, and adds other ſacred and moſt engaging ties to bind us ſtill more ſtrongly to another. We are taught to love our neighbours as ourſelves, to rejoice in their happineſs, and endeavour to promote it, to do good to all as far as we have opportunity; yea, even to extend our benevolence to our enemies themſelves, and to thoſe that have injured us; and to be ready to render good for evil, and overcome evil with good. It tends to diſcountenance and ſuppreſs that malice and envy, hatred and revenge, thoſe boiſterous angry paſſions, and malevolent affections and diſpoſitions, which have done ſo much miſchief in the world.

As to the exerciſe of ſelf-government, Chriſtianity is manifeſtly deſigned to improve and perfect human nature. It teaches us not only to regulate the outward actions, but the inward affections and diſpoſitions of the ſoul; to labour after real purity of heart, ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, as that without which no outward appearances can be pleaſing in the ſight of God. It ſtrikes at the root of all our diſorders and corruptions, by obliging us to correct and regulate that inordinate ſelf-love, which cauſeth us to centre all our views in ourſelves, in our own pleaſure, or glory, or intereſt, and by inſtructing us to mortify and ſubdue our ſenſual appetites and inclinations. It is deſigned to aſſert the dominion of the rational and moral powers over the inferior part of our nature, of the ſpirit over the fleſh, which alone can lay a juſt foundation for that moral liberty, and that tranquillity of mind, which it is the deſign of all true philoſophy to procure and eſtabliſh. And whereas a too great love of the world, and its enjoyments, its riches, honours, or pleaſures, is the ſource of numberleſs diſorders in human life, and turns us aſtray in our whole courſe, it teacheth us to rectify our falſe opinions of theſe things, and not to ſeek happineſs in them, but to ſet our affections

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principally on things of a far higher and nobler nature, things celeſtial and eternal. And with regard to the evils of this preſent life and world, it tendeth to inſpire us with the nobleſt fortitude, and to render us ſuperior to thoſe evils, as being perſuaded that God will cauſe them to work together for our good, and will over-rule them to our greater happineſs. It provideth the beſt remedy both againſt our cares and fears, eſpecially againſt the fear of death itſelf.

All that are acquainted with the New Teſtament know, that this is a true though imperfect repreſentation of the nature and tendency of the religion of Jeſus; nor need I point to the particular paſſages that prove it. Indeed the excellence of the morals there preſcribed is ſo evident, that the enemies of Chriſtianity have been obliged to pretend that its precepts are carried to a too great degree of ſtrictneſs, impracticable to human nature in its preſent ſtate. But not to urge, that the rule ſet before us ought to be perfect, and that though perhaps none of us can in every inſtance fully come up to it, yet it tendeth to inſpire a laudable ambition, and to put us upon a conſtant endeavour of going on towards perfection, that we may approach ſtill nearer to the preſcribed pattern of excellence; not to urge this, it deſerveth ſpecial obſervation, that though morality is carried by our Saviour both in his precepts and example to the height of purity and excellence, yet it is not, under pretence of extraordinary refinement, carried to unwarrantable extremes. It is not required of us to extinguiſh the paſſions, as the ſtoics pretended to do, but to govern and moderate them, and keep them within proper bounds. Chriſtianity doth not preſcribe an unfeeling apathy, or pretend to render us inſenſible to the evils of this preſent life; but directeth us to bear up under them with patience and conſtancy, ſupported by the conſiderations of reaſon and religion, and encouraged by the glorious proſpects that are before us. We are taught to deny ourſelves: but the intention is only that we ſhould ſubject our inferior appetites to the noble part of our natures, and that the pleaſures and intereſts of the fleſh and the world ſhould be made to give way to intereſts of a higher nature, to the duty we owe to God, and to the love of truth, virtue, and righteouſneſs, whenever they happen to come into competition. We are required not to make proviſion for the

the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof; but we are not urged to macerate our bodies with excessive rigours and austerities, or to chastise them with bloody discipline. We are to be heavenly-minded, and to set our affections upon the things which are above; but so as not to neglect the duties, businesses, and offices of human life; an attendance to which is expressly required of us in the gospel-law. We are not commanded absolutely to quit the world; but, which is a much nobler attainment, to live above the world, whilst we are in it, and to keep ourselves free from its pollutions; not wholly to renounce our present enjoyments, but to be moderate in the use of them, and so to *use this world* as not to *abuse it*. All drunkenness and gluttony and excesses of riot are forbidden, and we are required to exercise a regular sobriety and temperance in our food; but we are not commanded to abstain from divers kinds of meats, and are taught that *every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving*, for it is *sanctified by the word of God and prayer*. It is required of us, that we may be chaste and pure, keeping *our vessels clean in sanctification and honour, and not in the lusts of concupiscence*; and yet an undue stress is not laid upon virginity or celibacy, as was too much done in after ages, but marriage is declared to be *honourable in all, and the bed undefiled*. Polygamy, which was formerly in some measure tolerated, is no longer so under the perfect institution of our Saviour. And the gospel-precepts in this respect, though exclaimed against as harsh and severe, are really most agreeable to the original intention of marriage, and the balance maintained by providence between the sexes. The Christian people are directed to pay a due reverence to their pastors, and to *esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake*; but they are not commanded to yield a blind submission to them; and their pastors are forbidden to act as *lords over God's heritage*, or as having *dominion over* their *faith*, but as *helpers of their joy*. And finally it is evident, that in the whole scheme of the Christian religion, as taught by Christ and his Apostles, there is not the least trace to be found of worldly ambition, avarice, or sensuality. Virtue is there placed on the best and most solid foundations; our duties are urged upon us in their proper order, they are traced from their true source, and directed to their proper end. We are taught to aspire continually

tinually to higher degrees of holineſs and virtue, and not to take up with a meaner felicity than that which ariſeth from a perfect conformity to God himſelf, and the eternal enjoyment of him. In one word, Chriſtian morality, or the duty required of us, is ſummed up by our great heavenly teacher, in love, love to God, and charity towards mankind, accompanied with real purity of heart and life. And all this is to be attended with an amiable humility. We muſt abound in good works, but not glory in them: when we have done our beſt, and aſpired to the nobleſt attainments that we are capable of in this preſent ſtate, all vainglorious boaſting, all confidence in our own righteouſneſs or merits, is excluded. On God and his grace we muſt place our dependence, and to this aſcribe the glory.

What a lovely idea is here ſet before us of moral excellence! And as the goſpel-precepts are ſo pure, preſcribing our duty in its proper extent, ſo the ſtrength and power of the motives there propoſed, if duly attended to, will be found anſwerable to the purity of the precepts. And in this all the moral ſyſtems that natural religion or philoſophy can furniſh, are very deficient. Our duty is bound upon us in the holy Scripture, by the expreſs authority and command of God himſelf, which muſt needs give a mighty weight to the precepts and directions there preſcribed. All the charms of the divine goodneſs, grace, and love are repreſented to our view, to lead us to repentance and holy obedience. The moſt perfect models are ſet before us: God himſelf is exhibited to our imitation, as the great original of moral goodneſs and excellence; and the example of his well-beloved Son, who was the living image of his own love, goodneſs, and purity here below. Good men are honoured with the moſt glorious characters, and are inveſted with the moſt valuable privileges, that they may be excited and engaged to walk worthy of thoſe characters and privileges, and of the *high calling wherewith* they are *called.* And for our greater encouragement, the moſt expreſs aſſurances are given us of God's readineſs to communicate the gracious influences of his Holy Spirit; not to render our own endeavours needleſs, but to aſſiſt and animate our ſincere endeavours. The important ſolemnities of a future judgment are diſplayed before us in the moſt ſtriking manner, when every man muſt give an account of himſelf to God, and muſt

receive according to the things done in his body, whether good or evil. Nothing can poſſibly be more noble and more engaging than the idea that is there given us of a glorious reſurrection, and of that eternal life which is prepared for good men in the heavenly world, which is repreſented to us not merely as a paradiſe of ſenſual delights, but as a pure and ſublime felicity, fitted to animate the moſt virtuous and excellent minds. And on the other hand, the puniſhments that ſhall be inflicted on the obſtinately impenitent and diſobedient, are repreſented in ſuch a manner as is moſt proper to awaken and deter preſumptuous ſinners, who will not be wrought upon by the beauty and excellence of virtue, and the charms of divine love and goodneſs.

Any man that impartially conſiders theſe things, if he be really and in good earneſt a friend to virtue and to mankind, would be apt to wiſh the Chriſtian revelation true, and to acknowledge the great advantage of it where it is heartily believed and embraced. For, muſt it not be a mighty advantage to have the great principles of religion, which are of ſuch vaſt importance to our happineſs, confirmed by the teſtimony of God himſelf?—to have our duty urged upon us in his name, and plainly ſet before us in expreſs precepts, which muſt needs come with a far ſuperior force, conſidered as enjoined by a divine authority, than as the dictates of philoſophers or moraliſts?—to have the moſt explicit declarations made to us in the name of God himſelf, concerning the terms upon which forgiveneſs is to be obtained, and concerning the extent of that forgiveneſs, with reſpect to which many anxious jealouſies and fears might otherwiſe be apt to ariſe in our hearts? And finally, to be aſſured by expreſs revelation from God, of the nature, greatneſs, and eternal duration of that reward, with which he will crown our ſincere though imperfect obedience: a reward far tranſcending not only our deſerts, but even all that we could expect, or were able to conceive!

And now, upon reviewing this ſcheme of religion, which is undoubtedly the ſcheme of Chriſtianity, as ſet before us in the New Teſtament, it is a reflection that naturally offereth itſelf, that, ſuppoſing God had thought fit to make an extraordinary revelation of his will to mankind, it can ſcarce be conceived,

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that it could be fuller of goodneſs and purity, that it could contain more excellent precepts, or ſet before us a more perfect model and example, or be enforced by more powerful motives, or be directed to nobler ends. Could ſuch a ſcheme of religion as hath been mentioned, be the product either of impoſture or enthuſiaſm? Its whole nature, deſign, and tendency, manifeſtly ſhew, that it could not be the work of impoſtors; eſpecially of impoſtors ſo wicked, as to forge a ſeries of the moſt extraordinary facts; not merely a ſingle impoſture, but a chain of impoſtures, and ſolemnly atteſt them in the name of God himſelf, when they themſelves knew them to be abſolutely falſe. There is nothing in the whole contexture of this religion that favours of private ſelfiſh intereſts, or carnal views, or worldly policy. And is it conſiſtent with the character of impoſtors, without any regard to their own worldly advantage, to expoſe themſelves to all manner of ſufferings, reproaches, and perſecutions, and even to death itſelf, for publiſhing a ſcheme of pure religion, piety, and righteouſneſs, merely from a deſire of promoting the glory of God, and the good of mankind? To which may be added, that the perſons who, we know, firſt publiſhed this religion to the world, were abſolutely incapable of inventing ſuch an admirable ſcheme of religion as Chriſtianity is. If they could have entertained a deſign of putting a religion of their own invention upon the world, it muſt have been, conſidering their notions and prejudices, very different in many things from that which is taught in the New Teſtament. Nor could they have had it in their power, if they had been willing, to have impoſed ſuch a ſeries of facts in that age, many of them repreſented to be of a very public nature, if they had been falſe. And it is equally abſurd to ſuppoſe this religion to have been the product of enthuſiaſm, as of impoſture. Could enthuſiaſm produce ſuch a beautiful and regular ſcheme, ſo conſiſtent in all its parts, exhibiting ſuch juſt and noble ideas of God and of religion, ſuch a perfect rule of duty, in which moral excellence is raiſed to the higheſt degree of purity, without running to extremes, and is enforced by ſuch engaging motives, ſo admirably fitted to the excellence of the precepts? Surely this, which is ſo vaſtly ſuperior to any ſcheme of religion or morals taught by the moſt wiſe and learned philoſophers and moraliſts, could not be the

work of enthuſiaſts, eſpecially of ſuch frantic enthuſiaſts as they muſt have been, if they really believed that the wonderful facts recorded in the goſpels were done before their eyes, and that they themſelves were endued with ſuch extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, and performed the moſt ſtupendous miracles, when there was no ſuch thing. And ſince the goſpel-ſcheme of religion was neither the product of enthuſiaſm nor of impoſture, it was not of human invention: and as it cannot be ſuppoſed to have had its riſe from evil beings, ſuperior to man, who would never lend their aſſiſtance to enforce and eſtabliſh ſuch an excellent ſcheme of religion, virtue, and righteouſneſs, it followeth that the account given by the firſt publiſhers of it was true, and that they received it, as they themſelves declared, by revelation from God himſelf.

Upon the whole, taking all theſe things together, there ſeems to be as much evidence of the truth and divinity of the Scripture revelation, as could be reaſonably expected and deſired, ſuppoſing a revelation, really given. For on the one hand, it hath the moſt excellent internal characters of truth and goodneſs in its nature and tendency, whereby it appeareth to be worthy of God, pure, holy, and heavenly, admirably calculated to promote the glory of God, and the good of mankind, and the cauſe of righteouſneſs and virtue in the world, and to prepare men by a life of holy obedience on earth for the eternal enjoyment of God in heaven. On the other hand, it was accompanied with the moſt illuſtrious external atteſtations, ſuch as carried the manifeſt proofs of a divine interpoſition, and which it cannot reaſonably be ſuppoſed God would ever give, or permit to be given, to an impoſture.

As to the Chriſtian ſcheme of a Mediator, the prejudices which ſome have been apt to entertain againſt Chriſtianity on that account, ſeem principally to have ariſen from miſapprehenſions or miſrepreſentations of that doctrine. It has been repreſented, as if the notion of a mediator between God and man, ſuppoſed the ſupreme Being, the Father of the univerſe, to be in himſelf implacable and inexorable, and to have had no thoughts of mercy or pity towards ſinners of the human race, till he was prevailed upon, contrary to his own inclinations, by the ſolicitations of a powerful Mediator. But this is not

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the idea of the Mediator given us in the holy Scriptures. On the contrary, the very appointment of the Mediator is there repreſented as wholly owing to the free and ſovereign grace and goodneſs of God, the Father of all, who being full of love and compaſſion, and determined to ſhew mercy towards his guilty creatures, fixed upon this way of doing it, by ſending his own Son into the world, to recover them from their guilt, corruption, and miſery, to holineſs and happineſs.

In what method it may pleaſe God to tranſact with guilty creatures, who have offended him by their tranſgreſſions and diſobedience, and to diſpenſe his acts of grace and favour towards them, we cannot take upon us certainly to determine, except he ſhould pleaſe to reveal it. This dependeth upon what ſeemeth moſt becoming his own glorious majeſty, and moſt meet to his infinite wiſdom, for anſwering the great ends and reaſons of his government; of which we cannot pretend, if left to ourſelves, to be competent judges. But the making uſe of a Mediator in the way the goſpel informeth us, through whom his benefits are conferred upon us, and in whoſe name our prayers and ſervices are offered to his acceptance, ſeemeth to be admirably fitted for preſerving the dignity of his ſupreme authority and government, and an awful ſenſe and veneration of his infinite majeſty and greatneſs, his righteouſneſs and purity, in the minds of his creatures, together with an humbling ſenſe and conviction of their own guilt and unworthineſs, and the great evil of their ſins and tranſgreſſions; and at the ſame time it greatly contributeth to diſpel their guilty jealouſies and fears, and to inſpire them with ingenuous affiance in his grace and mercy, and a hope of his gracious acceptance.

Some notion of the propriety of a Mediator, through whom we have acceſs to God, and his benefits are communicated to us, hath very generally obtained among mankind, which probably might have its riſe in a tradition derived from the earlieſt ages. But this, like other principles of that moſt ancient primitive religion, became very much corrupted among the nations, who worſhipped a great number of idol gods and idol mediators. Under the Jewiſh œconomy, the great Mediator was typified and prefigured, both by Moſes, who was appointed to tranſact between God and the people, and eſpecially in the office of the high-prieſt,

and the ſolemnities of the ſervice he was to perform on their behalf on the great day of expiation. And there was alſo preſerved amongſt them, a notion and expectation of a glorious deliverer, deſcribed under the moſt divine characters, who was to appear in the fulneſs of time, and who, according to the prophecies concerning him, was to *make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlaſting righteouſneſs:* though they afterwards perverted the true ſenſe of thoſe prophecies to accommodate them to their own carnal prejudices, and to their worldly hopes and views.

But in the goſpel this part of the divine œconomy is brought into the cleareſt light; and the idea that is there given of the Mediator is the nobleſt that can be conceived; whether we conſider the glorious dignity of his perſon, in which the divine and human nature is wonderfully united, or the offices aſcribed to him, which are ſuch as are admirably fitted to the great work upon which he was ſent, the ſaving and redeeming mankind. What can poſſibly give us a higher idea of God's unparalleled grace and goodneſs, than that for us men, and for our ſalvation, he ſent his own Son, to aſſume our nature, to inſtruct us as our great heavenly Teacher, and bring the cleareſt and fulleſt revelation of the divine will that was ever given to mankind; and to make a declaration in the Father's name, of his free grace and mercy towards ſinners of the human race, and of the gracious terms upon which he will receive them to his favour, and give them eternal life; to guide and lead us by his own example, and exhibit in his own ſacred life and practice the moſt perfect model of univerſal goodneſs and purity, and of every amiable virtue, for our imitation; to make an atonement for our ſins by his moſt meritorious obedience and ſufferings, that he might obtain eternal redemption for us; to give us a certain pledge and aſſurance of a bleſſed reſurrection, and of the happineſs prepared for good men in the higheſt heavens, by his own reſurrection from the dead, his aſcenſion into heaven, and exaltation to glory; to rule us as the great King and Head of his Church, by his holy and moſt excellent laws and ordinances; and to appear for us in the heavenly ſanctuary as our great advocate with the Father, who ever continueth to interpoſe for ſinful men, and in whoſe name we are to offer up our prayers, and to hope for the acceptance

ance of our ſervices. Add to this, that he is conſtituted the great diſpenſer of ſpiritual benefits, through whom God is pleaſed to communicate the bleſſings of his grace, and the aids of his Holy Spirit, for aſſiſting us in our ſincere endeavours, and training us up by a life of holy obedience for eternal felicity. And to complete the glorious ſcheme, this great Saviour and Mediator is appointed to raiſe the dead, and judge the world in the Father's name, and to diſpenſe eternal retributions of rewards and puniſhments to men according to their deeds, the conſideration of which muſt needs give a mighty weight to his authority and laws.

Theſe are things great and aſtoniſhing, and which could not have entered into the human mind, if God had not revealed them. But now that they are revealed, they form a moſt grand and harmonious ſyſtem, the ſeveral parts of which are like ſo many links of a beautiful chain, one part anſwering to another, and all concurring to exhibit an admirable plan, in which the wiſdom, the grace, and goodneſs, and the righteouſneſs of God, moſt eminently ſhine forth. So that, inſtead of being a juſt cauſe of objection againſt the Chriſtian revelation, it rather furniſheth a new proof of its divine original, and that it was not a mere human invention, but came by revelation from God himſelf. A moſt glorious and amazing ſcene is here opened, which tendeth to fill the believing mind with the higheſt admiration and reverence, love and joy. It is true, there are great difficulties attending the Chriſtian ſcheme of the Mediator, and the doctrine of the Trinity which is connected with it. But there is nothing in it that can be proved to be contradictory or impoſſible, taking it in the ſimplicity in which it is delivered in holy writ, and not as it has been perplexed and obſcured by the ſubtilties and raſh deciſions of men. And it would be a wrong and unreaſonable conduct to reject a revelation of ſo excellent a nature, and ſuch an admirable tendency, and enforced by ſo many convincing proofs and illuſtrious atteſtations, becauſe there are ſome things in it of a high and myſterious nature, and attended with difficulties, which we are not well able to ſolve; for ſurely if we have good proof of its being a divine revelation, the authority of God is a ſufficient reaſon for our receiving it, notwithſtanding thoſe difficulties. If we are reſolved to admit nothing as true that hath great diffi-

culties, nothing but what we are able clearly to explain, we muſt renounce all religion, and have recourſe to atheiſm, which yet, beſides its ſhocking and horrid conſequences, hath the moſt unſurmountable difficulties of all. What is there more certain, and yet harder to form a diſtinct and conſiſtent notion of, than abſolute eternity? The immenſity of the Supreme Being, whatever way we take of explaining it, is attended with difficulties too great for the human mind. There is not any thing in all nature more evident than the characters of wiſdom and deſign in the frame of the univerſe; and yet there are many particular things relating to it, the deſign of which it is ſcarce poſſible for us to account for in this preſent ſtate, from whence perſons of an atheiſtical turn have taken occaſion to deny an infinitely wiſe preſiding mind. The ſame thing may be ſaid with regard to the goodneſs of God, which is eſtabliſhed by the ſtrongeſt proofs, and of which we feel the moſt lively ſenſations in our own breaſts; and yet every one knows, who has carried his inquiries deep into theſe things, that there are many appearances which we find it extremely hard to reconcile to our ideas of goodneſs, and which probably never will be fully cleared, till we have a more extenſive view of the plan of the divine adminiſtration than now we can attain to. There is nothing we are more intimately conſcious of than human liberty and free agency, or which is of greater importance to the very foundations of government and morality; and yet if we conſider it metaphyſically, no ſubject is attended with greater difficulties, as the ableſt metaphyſicians and philoſophers in all ages have acknowledged. The ſame may be ſaid of the notion of ſpiritual and material ſubſtance, and the infinite diviſibility of the latter, and of many other things of the like nature. It is a principle, which hath been admitted by the greateſt maſters of reaſon, that when once a thing is proved by proper evidences, and arguments ſufficient in their kind, we are not to reject it, merely becauſe it may be attended with difficulties, which we know not how to ſolve. This principle is admitted in philoſophy; it muſt be admitted with regard to natural religion; and why then ſhould it not be admitted with regard to Chriſtianity too?

As to the corruptions of Chriſtians, and the abuſes of Chriſtianity, and the additions that have been made to it, which have

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furniſhed the deiſts with their moſt plauſible objections, it ought to be conſidered, that the Chriſtian religion cannot in reaſon be made accountable for thoſe abuſes and corruptions. The proper remedy in that caſe is not to throw off all regard for the goſpel, but to endeavour to recover men from their deviations from it. And in this, the pains of thoſe that pretend to a true liberty of thinking might be profitably employed. If they have a true regard to the happineſs of mankind, and to the cauſe of virtue in the world, the beſt way to anſwer that deſign is, not to endeavour to expoſe the ſcriptures to contempt, but to engage men to a greater veneration for thoſe ſacred oracles, and a cloſer adherence to them in doctrine and practice; not to attempt to ſet men free from the obligations of Chriſtianity, but to do what they can, that the hearts and conſciences of men may be brought under the power of its excellent inſtructions and important motives, and may be governed by its holy laws, which would be of the happieſt conſequence both to larger ſocieties and particular perſons.

To conclude: It is to be hoped, that the view that hath been taken of the attempts which have been made againſt Chriſtianity among us beyond the example of former ages, inſtead of ſhocking the faith of true Chriſtians, will only tend to convince them that it ſtandeth upon the moſt ſolid foundation, not to be ſhaken by the malice or ſubtilty of its ableſt adverſaries. The ſtrange eagerneſs ſo many have ſhewn to ſubvert the credit and authority of the goſpel, ſhould awaken in us a well-conducted zeal for the intereſts of our holy religion, and ſhould heighten our eſteem for true uncorrupted Chriſtianity as taught in the holy ſcriptures. We can never be ſufficiently thankful to God for ſo glorious an advantage as that of the light of the goſpel ſhining among us. This we ſhould eſteem the moſt valuable of all our privileges, and ſhould regard every attempt to deprive us of it, as an attempt to deprive us of our happineſs and glory, and to bring us into darkneſs and miſery; to rob good men of their nobleſt joys and comforts, the moſt powerful helps, and the moſt animating motives to the practice of piety and virtue; and to free bad men from their apprehenſions of the wrath of God and future puniſhment, and thereby remove the moſt effectual reſtraints to vice and wickedneſs.

wickedneſs. The cauſe of Chriſtianity is the cauſe of God. Let us therefore take the moſt effectual methods in our power to maintain and to promote it. And this calleth for the united endeavours of all that bear the glorious name of Chriſtians. A great deal has been done in this age in a way of reaſon and argument. But this, however proper and laudable, is not alone ſufficient. For it is a thing which cannot be too much inculcated, that a mere notional and ſpeculative belief of Chriſtianity will be of ſmall avail; and that the principal care of thoſe who profeſs it ſhould be, to get their hearts and lives brought under the governing influence of its divine doctrines and excellent precepts, that it may not be merely an outward form, but a living principle within them. Among the many unhappy conſequences which have ariſen from the diſputes that have with ſo much indecency and eagerneſs been carried on againſt our holy religion, this is not the leaſt, that it hath carried men's minds too much off from the vital part of religion, and hath led them to regard it as a matter of ſpeculation and diſpute, rather than of practice. But this is to forget the very nature and deſign of Chriſtianity, which is not a bare ſyſtem of ſpeculative opinions, but a practical inſtitution, a ſpiritual and heavenly diſcipline, full of life and power, all whoſe *doctrines*, *precepts*, *ordinances*, *motives*, are manifeſtly intended to form us to a godlike temper, to real holineſs of heart and life. And thoſe good men who are not able to do much for it in a way of argumentation, may yet effectually promote its ſacred intereſts, by walking according to the excellent rules of the goſpel, and ſhewing the advantageous influence it hath upon their temper and conduct, and thus making an amiable repreſentation of it to the world. And though it highly becometh thoſe, whoſe office it is to teach and inſtruct others, to be well furniſhed with divine knowledge, ſo as to be able by ſound reaſon and argument to convince, or at leaſt to confute, the gainſayers; yet one of the moſt eſſential ſervices they can do to the Chriſtian cauſe, is, by their doctrine and by their example to lead the Chriſtian people into the practice of all holineſs and goodneſs. This would tend more than any thing elſe to ſtop the mouths of adverſaries, and would probably, as it did in many inſtances in the firſt ages of the Chriſtian church, gain them over to a good opinion of that religion, which is fitted to produce ſuch excellent fruits.

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Theſe are reflections which naturally ariſe upon this ſubject. But I ſhall not inſiſt farther upon them at preſent; eſpecially as I ſhall have occaſion to reſume ſome of them in an addreſs to Deiſts and profeſſed Chriſtians, which I ſhall here ſubjoin as a proper concluſion of the whole work.

I am, dear and worthy Sir,

Your moſt affectionate and obliged

Friend and Servant,

JOHN LELAND.

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CONCLUSION,

IN AN ADDRESS TO

DEISTS AND PROFESSED CHRISTIANS.

Thoſe are inexcuſable who reject Chriſtianity at a venture, without due Examination—Deiſtical Authors unſafe Guides, and ſhew little Sign of a fair and impartial Inquiry—Several of their Objections ſuch as cannot be reaſonably urged againſt Chriſtianity at all—Thoſe Objections only are of real Weight which tend to invalidate its Proofs and Evidences, or which are drawn from the Nature of the Religion itſelf, to ſhew that it is unworthy of God—The Attempts of the Deiſts on each of theſe Heads ſhewn to be inſufficient—An Expoſtulation with them concerning the great Guilt and Danger of their Conduct, and the ill Conſequences of it both to themſelves and to the Community—Thoſe profeſſed Chriſtians highly culpable, who live in an habitual Negligence and Inconſideration with regard to Religion, or who ſlight public Worſhip and the Chriſtian Inſtitutions, or who indulge themſelves in an immoral and vicious Practice—A wicked Chriſtian, of all Characters, the moſt inconſiſtent—Advice to thoſe who profeſs to believe the Goſpel—They ſhould be thankful to God for their Privileges—They ſhould labour to be well acquainted with the Holy Scriptures—And, above all, they ſhould be careful to adorn their Profeſſion by a holy and virtuous Life—A Chriſtian acting up to the Obligations of Chriſtianity forms a glorious Character, which derives a Splendour to the moſt exalted Station—This illuſtriouſly exemplified in a great Perſonage of the higheſt Dignity—The vaſt Importance of a careful Education of Children, and the bad Effects of neglecting it—And here alſo the ſame eminent Example is recommended to the Imitation of all, eſpecially of the great and noble.

HAVING

HAVING endeavoured to give as clear a general view as I was able of the principal deiſtical writers of the laſt and preſent age, and having made large and particular remarks on the two moſt noted authors who have appeared of late among us in that cauſe, I ſhall now, as a concluſion of this work, take the liberty to addreſs myſelf, both to thoſe that take upon them the character of deiſts and free-thinkers, and who reject the Chriſtian revelation; and to thoſe who are honoured with the name of Chriſtians, and who profeſs to receive the religion of Jeſus as of divine authority.

The former may be ranked principally into two ſorts. They are either ſuch as, taking it for granted that Chriſtianity has been proved to be an impoſition on mankind, reject it at a venture, without being able to aſſign a reaſon for rejecting it, or at moſt take up with ſome ſlight objections, and content themſelves with general clamours of prieſtcraft and impoſture, without giving themſelves the trouble of making a diſtinct inquiry into the nature of the religion itſelf, or examining its proofs and evidences; or, they are ſuch as pretend to reject Chriſtianity, becauſe, upon a due examination and inquiry, they have found it to be deſtitute of ſufficient proof, and have diſcovered in it the marks of falſehood and impoſture, which convince them that it cannot be of divine original. There is reaſon to apprehend, that the greater part of thoſe among us who paſs under the name of deiſts, come under the former of theſe characters. But the conduct of ſuch perſons is ſo manifeſtly abſurd as to admit of no excuſe. For what pretence have they to glory in the title of Free-thinkers, who will not be at the pains to think cloſely and ſeriouſly at all, even in matters of the higheſt conſequence? There are few therefore who are willing to own that this is their caſe. Whether they have really given themſelves the trouble of a free and diligent examination and inquiry, or not, they would be thought to have done ſo, and not to have rejected the Chriſtian revelation without having good reaſons for their unbelief. It is therefore to ſuch perſons that I would now addreſs myſelf.

Of this ſort profeſſedly are thoſe that have appeared among us under the character of deiſtical writers. They have made a ſhew of attacking Chriſtianity in a way of reaſon and argument. But, upon the view which hath been taken of them it may, I think,

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be ſafely declared, that whatever they have offered that had the face of argument, hath been ſolidly confuted, the evidences of Chriſtianity have been placed in a fair and conſiſtent light, and their objections againſt it have been ſhewn to be vain and inſufficient. Though there never were writers more confident and aſſuming, or who have expreſſed a greater admiration of themſelves, and contempt of others, it hath been ſhewn, that, taking them generally, they have had little to ſupport ſuch glorious pretences: That no writers ever acted a part more unfair and diſingenuous: That though they have ſet up for advocates of natural religion in oppoſition to revealed, yet many of them have endeavoured to ſubvert the main articles even of natural religion, and have uſed arguments which bear equally againſt all religion, and tend to baniſh it out of the world: That they have often put on a ſhew of great regard for genuine original Chriſtianity, whilſt at the ſame time they have uſed their utmoſt efforts to deſtroy its evidences, and ſubvert its authority: That inſtead of repreſenting the Chriſtian religion fairly as it is, they have had recourſe to miſrepreſentation and abuſe, and have treated the holy Scriptures in a manner which would not be borne, if put in practice againſt any other ancient writings of the leaſt reputation, and which is indeed inconſiſtent with all the rules of candour and decency: That with regard to the extraordinary facts by which Chriſtianity is atteſted, they have advanced principles which would be accounted perfectly ridiculous if applied to any other facts, and which really tend to deſtroy all moral evidence, and the credit of all paſt facts whatſoever: And finally, that never were there writers more inconſiſtent with themſelves and with one another, or who have diſcovered more apparent ſigns of obſtinate prepoſſeſſion and prejudice. And ſhould not all this naturally create a ſuſpicion of a cauſe which ſtands in need of ſuch management, and of writers who have been obliged to have recourſe to arts ſo little reconcileable to truth and candour? And yet it is to be apprehended, that many of thoſe who laugh at others for relying upon their teachers, are ready to reſign themſelves to their deiſtical leaders, and to take their pretences and confident aſſertions, and even their jeſts and ſarcaſms, for arguments.

Many of the objections which have been produced with great pomp,

pomp, and which have created ſome of the ſtrongeſt prejudices againſt Chriſtianity, are ſuch as cannot be properly urged againſt it with any appearance of reaſon at all. Such are the objections drawn from the abuſes and corruptions which have been introduced contrary to its original deſign, or from the ill conduct of many of its profeſſors and miniſters. For whilſt the Chriſtian religion, as taught by Chriſt and his apoſtles, and delivered in the holy Scriptures, may be demonſtrated to be of a moſt uſeful and admirable nature and tendency, whilſt the proofs and evidences of it ſtand entire, and the truth of the facts whereby it was atteſted is ſufficiently eſtabliſhed, the reaſon for embracing it ſtill holds good: and to reject a religion in itſelf excellent, for abuſes and corruptions, which many of thoſe that make the objection acknowledge are not juſtly chargeable upon true original Chriſtianity, is a conduct that cannot be juſtified, and is indeed contrary to the dictates of reaſon and good ſenſe. The ſame obſervation may be made with regard to ſome other objections which have been frequently urged againſt the Chriſtian revelation, and particularly that which is drawn from its not having been univerſally promulgated. For if the evidences which are brought to prove that Chriſtianity is a true divine revelation, and that this revelation was really given, are good and valid, then its not having been made known to all mankind will never prove, that ſuch a revelation was not given. And ſuch a way of arguing in any other caſe would be counted impertinent. It is arguing from a thing, the reaſons of which we do not know, againſt the truth and certainty of a thing that we do know, and of which we are able to bring ſufficient proofs.

The only objections therefore, or arguments, which can really be of weight againſt Chriſtianity, are thoſe which either tend to invalidate its proofs and evidences, and to ſhew that the divine atteſtations which were given to it are not to be depended upon, or which are drawn from the nature of the revelation itſelf, to ſhew that it is abſurd and unworthy of God. And accordingly both theſe have been attempted. But whoſoever will impartially conſider the writings of the deiſtical authors, and compare them with thoſe of the advocates for Chriſtianity, will find how little they have advanced on either of theſe heads that is really to the purpoſe. The atteſtations given to Chriſtianity

tianity are of ſuch an extraordinary nature, and carry in them ſuch manifeſt proofs of a divine interpoſition, that few, if any, have ever owned the truth of thoſe facts, and yet denied the divine original of the Chriſtian revelation. Its adverſaries therefore have chiefly bent their force to deſtroy the credit of the facts. But they have not been able to invalidate the arguments which have been brought to prove that thoſe facts were really done: it hath been ſhewn, that the evidence produced for them is as great as could reaſonably be expected and deſired for any paſt facts whatſoever: that never was there any teſtimony, all things conſidered, more worthy of credit than that of the original witneſſes to thoſe facts: and that thoſe accounts have been tranſmitted to us by a conveyance ſo ſure and uninterrupted as can hardly be paralleled in any other caſe. This has been evinced by a clear deduction of proofs, to which little has been oppoſed but conjectures and ſuſpicions of fraud, and general clamours againſt moral evidence, and human teſtimony, without taking off the force of the proofs that have been brought on the other ſide.

As to the arguments urged againſt the Chriſtian revelation from the nature of the revelation itſelf, theſe muſt relate either to its doctrines or laws. With reſpect to the laws of Chriſtianity, it cannot reaſonably be denied, that its moral precepts are pure and excellent, and have a manifeſt tendency to promote the practice of piety and virtue in its juſt extent, and the peace and good order of the world. And they are enforced with the moſt powerful and important motives that can poſſibly be conceived, and the beſt fitted to work upon the human nature.

When the moral precepts of Chriſtianity could not be juſtly found fault with, a great clamour has been raiſed againſt its poſitive precepts and inſtitutions. And yet it is capable of being proved—it hath been often clearly proved, that theſe poſitive inſtitutions, taken in their primitive purity, and according to their original deſign, are admirably fitted to promote the great ends of all religion, and to ſtrengthen our obligations to a holy and a virtuous life. And this ſome of the moſt noted deiſtical writers have not been able to deny. And it has been lately fully acknowledged by Lord Bolingbroke.

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The only objection, therefore, which properly remains is againſt the doctrines of Chriſtianity. And before this objection can be properly brought to bear, two things are to be proved. The one is, that the doctrines objected againſt are doctrines of the true original Chriſtian religion as taught by Chriſt and his apoſtles, and delivered in the holy Scriptures. The other is, that theſe doctrines, as there taught, are really abſurd and contrary to reaſon. For a doctrine may be attended with great difficulties, very hard to be accounted for, and yet may be really true, and not contradictory to reaſon: which is evidently the caſe with reſpect to ſeveral important principles of what is called natural religion. The difficulty attending any doctrine, in our manner of conceiving it, is not a proper argument againſt its truth, if we have otherwiſe ſufficient evidence to convince us that that doctrine is true; and its being plainly aſſerted in a revelation proved to be divine is a ſufficient evidence. For to acknowledge a divine revelation to have been given, and yet receive nothing upon the credit of it, nothing but what we can prove to be true, or at leaſt highly probable, independently of that revelation, is a moſt abſurd and inconſiſtent conduct. It is to make a divine teſtimony paſs for nothing, and to pay no greater regard to a thing on account of its being divinely revealed, than if it had not been revealed at all. In this caſe, what is ſaid by a perſon, who cannot be ſuppoſed to be prejudiced in favour of Chriſtianity appears to be very reaſonable; which I ſhall here beg leave to repeat, though I had occaſion to take notice of it before, *viz.* that "when perſons have received the Chriſtian revelation for ge-"nuine, after ſufficient examination of its external and inter-"nal proofs, and have found nothing that makes it inconſiſtent "with itſelf, nor that is repugnant to any of thoſe divine "truths, which reaſon and the works of God demonſtrate to "them, ſuch perſons will never ſet up reaſon in contradiction "to it, on account of things plainly taught, but incomprehen-"ſible as to their manner of being: if they did, their reaſon "would be falſe and deceitful, they would ceaſe to be reaſon-"able men*." And elſewhere, after having obſerved that

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 384.

we cannot be obliged to believe againſt reaſon, he ſaith, that when a revelation hath paſſed through the neceſſary trials, "it is "to be received with the moſt profound reverence, with the "moſt entire ſubmiſſion, and with the moſt unfeigned thankſ-"giving. Reaſon has exerciſed her whole prerogative then, "and delivers us over to faith. To believe before all theſe trials, "or to doubt after them, is alike unreaſonable *."

And now, upon ſuch a view of things, you will allow me, gentlemen, ſeriouſly to expoſtulate with you, and to beſeech you to reflect whether, in rejecting and endeavouring to expoſe Chriſtianity, you act a wiſe and reaſonable part, and what is like to be the effect of your conduct both with regard to yourſelves, and to the public.

And firſt with regard to yourſelves. Conſider that the caſe now before you is not merely a matter of indifference, or of ſmall importance. Your own moſt eſſential intereſts are nearly concerned. If the goſpel be true and divine, to reject it will involve you in the greateſt guilt, and will expoſe you to the greater danger. The beſt that can be ſaid of your caſe upon ſuch a ſuppoſition is, that it is infinitely hazardous. If in fact it ſhould be found, that you have rejected a true divine revelation, which God himſelf hath confirmed with the moſt illuſtrious atteſtations; that you have refuſed the teſtimony which he had given of his Son, and have poured contempt on the Saviour whom he hath in his infinite wiſdom and love provided for us; that you have ſlighted the authority of his laws, and the offers of his grace, and have deſpiſed all his glorious promiſes, and ſet at nought his awful threatenings; this cannot poſſibly be a ſlight guilt, and therefore you have reaſon in that caſe to apprehend the ſevere effects of the divine diſpleaſure. Whatever favourable allowances may be made to thoſe who never heard of the goſpel, or had no opportunity of being inſtructed in it in its original purity, it is plain, from the whole tenor of the goſpel-declarations, that thoſe to whom it is clearly publiſhed, and who have its evidences plainly laid before them, and yet ſhut their eyes againſt the heavenly light, and deſpiſe its offered ſalvation, are in a very dangerous ſtate. And though it may be ſaid, that this is immediately

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. v. p. 279.

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to be underſtood of thoſe who lived in the age when the goſpel was firſt publiſhed, yet it holds in proportion with regard to thoſe in after-ages, to whom that revelation and its evidences are made known, and who yet wilfully reject it. For ſince God deſigned that revelation not merely for the age when it was firſt delivered, but for ſucceeding ages; and ſince accordingly it was ſo ordered, that both the revelation itſelf, its doctrines and laws, and an account of the divine atteſtations that were given to it, have been tranſmitted to us in ſuch a manner, as layeth a juſt foundation for our being aſſured, that this is the true original revelation, and that theſe facts were really done; then the obligation which lies upon thoſe to whom that revelation is made known to receive and ſubmit to it, and conſequently the guilt of rejecting it, ſtill ſubſiſts. Examine the revelation itſelf. Could you poſſibly expect a revelation given for nobler purpoſes, than to inſtruct us to form the moſt worthy notions of God, of his perfections, and of his providence, to ſet before us the whole of our duty in its juſt extent, to inſtruct us in the terms of our acceptance with God, to aſſure us of his readineſs to pardon our iniquities, and to receive us to his grace and favour upon our unfeigned repentance, and to crown our ſincere though imperfect obedience with the glorious reward of eternal life? Could any revelation be expected, whoſe precepts are more pure and excellent, or enforced by more weighty motives, or the uniform tendency of which is more manifeſtly fitted to promote the cauſe of virtue and righteouſneſs in the world? Or, could any revelation, ſuppoſing a revelation really given, be attended with more illuſtrious atteſtations? Will it be an excuſe fit to be offered to the great Ruler and Judge of the world, that you did not yourſelves ſee the miracles that were wrought, nor were witneſſes to the atteſtations that were given? This is in effect to demand, that all theſe facts ſhould be done over again for your conviction, or you will not believe them. But how unreaſonable is this, when the accounts of theſe facts are tranſmitted with a degree of evidence ſufficient to ſatisfy any unprejudiced mind, an evidence which muſt be admitted, except no paſt facts at all are to be believed, and which you yourſelves would account ſufficient in any other caſe! Or, will it be accepted as a juſt excuſe, that it contains ſome doctrines, which are attended with great difficulties

that we are not able to account for, and which relate to things that tranſcend our comprehenſion, when at the ſame time it cannot be denied that there are ſeveral things both in religion and philoſophy which the moſt wiſe and conſidering men think it reaſonable to believe, though they are liable to objections which they cannot give a clear ſolution of*? Or, is the true reaſon of your rejecting the goſpel your averſion to its holy laws, and that purity of heart and life that is there required? But is this a reaſon fit to be pleaded before God, or proper to ſatisfy your own conſciences? *This is the condemnation*, ſaith our Saviour, that light is come *into the world, but men have loved darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil.* If this ſhould be found to be really your caſe, and the true cauſe of your oppoſition to the goſpel, your guilt is of a very aggravated nature! It is to hate and oppoſe the light that ſhould convince and reform you, and to make the very excellence of the goſpel a reaſon for rejecting it. The beſt and wiſeſt men in all ages have owned the neceſſity of keeping the appetites and paſſions within proper bounds, and in a juſt ſubjection to the dominion of reaſon. And this is the great deſign of the Chriſtian law. And yet its precepts are not carried to an unreaſonable rigour and auſterity: it is not deſigned to extinguiſh the paſſions, but to moderate them, and allows them to be gratified within the bounds of temperance and innocence. Its precepts, if reduced to practice, would both tend to the true dignity and perfection of our nature, and lay a juſt foundation for an inward tranquillity and ſatisfaction of mind, and for a true moral liberty, the nobleſt liberty in the world; as no ſlavery is to be compared to a moral ſervitude, which conſiſteth in a vaſſalage to the vicious appetites and paſſions. A life led in conformity to the goſpel precepts, is, whatever you may think of it, the moſt delightful life in the world. It tendeth to improve and enlarge the ſocial affections, to inſpire an univerſal benevolence, to render men good and uſeful in every relation, and to reſtrain

* One of the moſt ſubtile writers that have of late appeared againſt Chriſtianity, ſays, "that no prieſtly dogmas ever ſhocked common ſenſe ſo much "as the infinite diviſibility of matter, with its conſequences," which yet has not hindered the ableſt mathematicians from believing it to be demonſtrably true. And he gives ſome other inſtances of the like kind. See Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 346, 347.

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and govern thoſe furious and malignant paſſions of envy, hatred, and revenge, which carry torment and bitterneſs in their nature. It directs us to a rational piety and devotion towards God, and tends to produce a noble and ingenuous confidence in him, and an entire reſignation to his will, and to refreſh and cheer the ſoul with a conſciouſneſs of the divine approbation. To this add the ſatisfactions and joys ariſing from all the wonders of the divine grace and goodneſs, as diſplayed in the goſpel, from the charms of redeeming love, and the great things Chriſt hath done and ſuffered for our ſalvation, from the glorious promiſes of the new covenant, from the gracious aids and influences of the Holy Spirit, and from the raviſhing and tranſporting proſpects that are before us. A bleſſed reſurrection and immortal life! You will be ready perhaps to charge this as enthuſiaſm: but I ſee no reaſon for it, except the nobleſt emotions of the human mind, and the exerciſe of our beſt affections upon the beſt and moſt excellent objects, muſt paſs under that name. Conſider, I beſeech you, what valuable privileges, what divine ſatisfaction, what raviſhing proſpects, you deprive yourſelves of by your infidelity! And what have you in exchange, but perplexing doubts and uncertainties, gloomy proſpects, and what you will hardly be able to get entirely rid of, anxious ſuſpicions and fears enough, where they prevail, to mar the comfort and ſatisfaction of life!

But let me now in the next place deſire you to reflect upon what may be the conſequences of your conduct with regard to the public. There are great and general complaints, and it were to be wiſhed there was not a juſt foundation for them, of a diſſoluteneſs of manners which ſeems to be growing among us. This is a matter in which the intereſts of the community are very nearly concerned. When once the corruption ſpreads through all orders and degrees of perſons, thoſe in higher and in lower ſtations, it muſt needs be attended with a perverſion of all public order, and ſap the very foundation of the public glory and happineſs. In proportion as vice and diſſoluteneſs prevail, it produces a neglect of honeſt induſtry, trade conſequently decays, fraud and violence increaſe, the reverence of oaths is loſt, and all the ties and bands that keep ſociety together are in danger of being diſſolved. Machiavel himſelf has decided, that a free government cannot be long maintained, when once a people are

become generally corrupt. All true friends therefore to the public order and liberty muſt wiſh, that virtue may flouriſh, and that men's vicious appetites and paſſions may be kept under proper reſtraints. And nothing is ſo fit to anſwer this end as religion. If the influence of religion were removed from the minds of men, and there were no fear of God before their eyes, civil laws would be found feeble reſtraints. This the ableſt politicians have been ſenſible of, and never was there any civilized government that did not take in religion for its ſupport *. And it may be eaſily proved that never was there any religion ſo well fitted for anſwering all theſe purpoſes as the Chriſtian. The two lateſt writers who have appeared againſt Chriſtianity have made full acknowledgments of the great uſefulneſs of religion, eſpecially that part of it which relateth to future rewards and puniſhments, to public communities: though both of them have moſt inconſiſtently endeavoured to ſubvert that doctrine of future retributions, the belief of which they own to be neceſſary for preſerving public peace and order. Mr Hume, ſpeaking of the received notion, that "the deity will inflict puniſhments on vice, and infinite rewards on virtue," ſays that "thoſe who attempt to "diſabuſe them of ſuch prejudices, may, for aught he knows,

* Lord Bolingbroke obſerves, that "the good effects of maintaining, "and bad effects of neglecting, religion, were extremely viſible in the "whole courſe of the Roman government—That though the Roman "religion eſtabliſhed by Numa was very abſurd, yet by keeping up an awe "of ſuperior power, and the belief of a providence that ordered the courſe "of events, it produced all the marvellous effects which Machiavel, after "Polybius, Cicero, and Plutarch, aſcribes to it." He adds, that "the "neglect of religion was a principal cauſe of the evils that Rome afterwards "ſuffered. Religion decayed, and the ſtate decayed with her*." And if even a falſe religion, by keeping up an awe of ſuperior power, and the belief of a providence, had ſo advantageous an influence on the proſperity of the ſtate, and the neglect of religion brought ſuch evils upon it; can they poſſibly be regarded as true friends to the public, who take ſo much pains to ſubvert the religion profeſſed among us, a religion eſtabliſhed upon the moſt rational and ſolid foundations, and to ſet men looſe from the awe of a ſuperior power, and the belief of a providence ordering the courſe of events, and the manifeſt tendency of whoſe attempts and endeavours is to leave us without any religion at all?

* *Lord Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p.* 428.

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" be good reaſoners, but he cannot allow them to be good citizens " and politicians; ſince they free men from one reſtraint upon " their paſſions, and make the infringement of the laws of equity " and ſociety, in one reſpect more eaſy and ſecure*." Lord Bolingbroke, ſpeaking of thoſe who " contrived religion for the " ſake of government," obſerves, that " they ſaw that the public " external religion would not anſwer their end, nor enforce " effectually the obligations of virtue and morality, without the " doctrine of future rewards and puniſhments †." And he ſays, " the doctrine of rewards and puniſhments in a future ſtate has " ſo great a tendency to enforce the civil laws, and to reſtrain the " vices of men, that reaſon, which, as he pretends, cannot de- " cide for it on principles of natural theology, will not decide " againſt it on principles of good policy ‡." And it is certain, that no religion placeth thoſe future retributions in ſo ſtrong and affecting a light as Chriſtianity does. The laſt mentioned author goes ſo far as to ſay, that " if the conflict between virtue and vice " in the great commonwealth of mankind was not maintained " by religious and civil inſtitutions, the human life would be in- " tolerable §." And now, I think, I may juſtly expoſtulate with thoſe gentlemen, who do what they can to propagate infidelity among us. What real good to mankind, what benefit to the ſociety or community, can you propoſe by endeavouring to expoſe Chriſtianity, its miniſtry and ordinances, to contempt, and to ſubvert its divine authority, and thereby deſtroy its influence on the minds and conſciences of men? Can you propoſe to aſſert and promote the cauſe of virtue, by taking away its ſtrongeſt ſupports, and thoſe motives which have the greateſt tendency to engage men to the practice of it? Or, can you propoſe to put a check to abounding licentiouſneſs, by removing the moſt powerful reſtraints to vice and wickedneſs? If it be ſo hard to reſtrain the corruption of mankind, and to keep their diſorderly appetites within proper bounds, even taking in all the aids of religion, and the amazing power of thoſe motives which Chriſtianity furniſheth, what could be expected, if all theſe were diſcarded, and men were left to gratify their paſſions without the

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 237.

† Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 60. ‡ Ib. vol. v. p. 322. § Ib. p. 227

dread of a ſupreme governor or judge? Surely then, however unfavourable to Chriſtianity your private ſentiments might be, you ought, for the ſake of the public, to conceal them, if you would approve yourſelves true lovers of your country, and zealous for the liberty and proſperity of it, and not take pains to propagate principles which in their conſequences muſt have the worſt influence on the peace, the welfare, and good order of the community. If what Lord Bolingbroke ſaith is true, that "no religion "ever appeared in the world, whoſe natural tendency was ſo "much directed to promote the peace and happineſs of mankind, "as the Chriſtian religion, conſidered as taught by Chriſt and his "apoſtles*;" with what face or conſiſtency can theſe pretend to public ſpirit, or to a concern for the public happineſs, who uſe their utmoſt efforts to ſubvert it, and repreſent its important motives as vain bugbears? Eſpecially how can ſuch perſons pretend to be real friends to the preſent conſtitution and government, which is founded on an attempt to maintain Chriſtianity in its purity as delivered in the holy ſcriptures, a zeal for which will always prove its greateſt ſecurity?

I hope, gentlemen, you will forgive the freedom of this expoſtulatory addreſs, which is not deſigned to reproach you, or to return railing for railing, which our holy religion forbids, but proceeds from an earneſt concern for your happineſs, and for promoting your beſt intereſts here and hereafter, as well as from a deſire, as far as my ability reaches, to ſerve the public, the welfare of which is very nearly concerned in the conſequences of your conduct.

I ſhall now beg leave to addreſs myſelf to thoſe who profeſs to value themſelves upon the name of Chriſtians; a name truly glorious, expreſſive of the moſt ſacred obligations and engagements, the moſt valuable privileges, and the moſt ſublime hopes. But the bare name of Chriſtians will be of little advantage, without the true ſpirit and practice of Chriſtianity. And it is impoſſible for any friend to religion and to mankind to obſerve, without a very ſenſible concern, what numbers there are of thoſe who would take it ill not to be called and accounted Chriſtians, that yet take little care to act ſuitably to that ſacred and honourable character.

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iv. p. 291.

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Many profeſſed Chriſtians there are, who ſcarce ever beſtow a ſerious thought upon thoſe things which it is the great deſign of the goſpel to inculcate on the hearts and minds of men. Let me deſire ſuch perſons to reflect a little what an inconſiſtent conduct they are guilty of. To profeſs to believe that God hath ſent his Son from heaven with meſſages of grace to ſinful men, and to bring diſcoveries of the higheſt importance, in which our everlaſting ſalvation is very nearly concerned, and yet not to allow theſe things a place in their thoughts, and to prefer the vrieſt trifles before them! Will you dare to ſay in words, that you do not think it worth your while to attend to what God thought fit to ſend his own Son to reveal? Why then do you act as if you thought ſo? No pretence of worldly buſineſs, though it is our duty to be diligent in it, can excuſe an utter habitual inconſideration and neglect of thoſe things, which, by profeſſing to believe Chriſtianity, we profeſs to believe to be of the greateſt importance. Much leſs will a hurry of diverſions be allowed to be a ſufficient excuſe. And yet how many are there whoſe time is taken up in low trifling pleaſures and amuſements, and who make that which at beſt ſhould only be the entertainment of a vacant hour, the very buſineſs of their lives! It is to be lamented, that this is too often the caſe with perſons diſtinguiſhed by their birth, their fortunes, and figure, in the world. As if all the advantage they propoſed by thoſe ſhining diſtinctions, was only the privilege of leading idle unmeaning lives, uſeleſs to themſelves, and to the community. Can reaſonable creatures think, that by ſuch a conſtant trifling away their precious time, they anſwer the end of their beings, the end for which they had the noble powers of reaſon given them? As if they were ſent into the world only to divert themſelves. Much leſs can Chriſtians believe, that they were formed for no higher and more valuable purpoſes. How often are the duties of the church and cloſet, thoſe of the ſocial relations, the care of children and of families, the kind offices and exerciſes of a noble and generous benevolence towards the poor, the indigent, the afflicted and diſconſolate, neglected and poſtponed, for the ſake of the moſt trifling amuſements; an immoderate fondneſs and attachment to which tends, even when it is leaſt hurtful, to

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produce a diſinclination to ſerious thought, and to impair the reliſh for that which is truly good, excellent, and improving!

But this is ſtill worſe, when what are called diverſions, tend to lay ſnares for virtue and innocence, and open the way to ſcenes of diſſoluteneſs and debauchery. Or, when what is called play and amuſement is carried to ſuch an exceſs as to hurt and ſquander away fortunes, which might be employed to the moſt valuable and uſeful purpoſes, and thereby diſables perſons of diſtinguiſhed rank from the duties they owe to their families and to the community, from the exerciſe of generous charity and benevolence, and even of juſtice too. To which may be added, the tendency it often hath to excite and exerciſe unworthy and diſorderly paſſions, and to produce the habits of fraud, falſehood, and a baſe illiberal thirſt after gain.

If our own obſervation and experience did not convince us of it, one would ſcarce think there could be perſons who profeſs to believe the goſpel, and to acknowledge its divine authority, and yet live in an habitual neglect of its public worſhip and ſacred inſtitutions. But that ſuch a neglect is becoming general among us, beyond the example of former times, cannot eſcape the notice of the moſt ſuperficial obſerver. There ſcarce ever was an inſtitution more wiſely and beneficially calculated for preſerving and promoting the intereſts of religion and virtue in the world, than that of ſetting apart one day in a week from worldly buſineſſes and cares, for the ſolemnities of public worſhip, and for inſtructing the people in the knowledge of religion, and exhorting them to the practice of it; and yet many there are that would take it ill not to be accounted Chriſtians, who ſeem to affect an open neglect, or even contempt of it. But it is not eaſy to conceive, what reaſonable pretence or excuſe can be alledged for ſuch a conduct. Will they, in good earneſt, aver, that they look upon it to be a reflection upon their ſenſe, or unworthy of their quality, to pay their public homage to their Maker and Redeemer; and to make open profeſſions of their regard to that religion, which yet they would be thought to believe? Or, have they ſuch an averſion to the exerciſe of religion, that the ſpending an hour or two in ſolemn acts of adoration, in prayer and thankſgiving, and in receiving inſtruc-

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tions and admonitions from his holy word, is a wearineſs which they cannot bear? But what is this, but to avow the great degeneracy of their own minds, and their want of a proper temper and diſpoſition for the nobleſt exerciſes, which beſt deſerve the attention of reaſonable beings? Or, do they pretend a high regard for moral virtue, as an excuſe for neglecting poſitive inſtitutions? But will any man, of the leaſt reflection, who knoweth the true ſtate of things among us, take upon him to declare, that the growing neglect of the ordinances of religion hath contributed to the promoting the practice of virtue? Or, that men's morals are generally mended, ſince they became more indifferent to thoſe ſacred ſolemnities? Nothing is more evident to any one, who impartially conſidereth the nature of thoſe divine inſtitutions and ordinances, which are appointed in the goſpel, than that a due obſervance of them according to their original inſtitution, beſides its being a public avowal of our religious homage, and of our faith in God, and in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, hath a manifeſt tendency to promote our moral improvement, and to exerciſe and ſtrengthen thoſe good affections and diſpoſitions which naturally lead to a holy and virtuous practice.

And as there are too many profeſſed Chriſtians, who openly neglect the inſtitutions of religion, there are others who ſeem to flatter themſelves that a mere outward attendance on divine ordinances, and the keeping up a form of religion, will be alone ſufficient, though they at the ſame time indulge themſelves in a practice contrary to the rules of virtue and morality. But all expedients for reconciling the practice of vice, of diſſoluteneſs, or diſhoneſty, with the faith and hope of the goſpel, are viſibly abſurd and vain. The moſt inconſiſtent of all characters is a wicked and vicious Chriſtian, which to any one that is acquainted with the true nature and deſign of Chriſtianity, ſeems to be a kind of contradiction in terms. For nothing is more evident than that a bad and diſſolute life is the moſt manifeſt contradiction to the whole deſign of the goſpel-revelation. What a ſtrange inconſiſtency is it for perſons to profeſs themſelves the diſciples of the holy Jeſus, and yet to counteract the very end he came into the world for! To profeſs to hope for ſalvation from him as promiſed in the goſpel, and yet to neglect the

the neceſſary terms, without which, we are there aſſured, ſalvation is not to be obtained! To believe that he came to deſtroy the works of the devil, and yet allow themſelves in thoſe works which he came to deſtroy! What an unamiable repreſentation do ſuch perſons make of Chriſtianity, if a judgment were to be formed of it from their conduct and practice! You would perhaps conceive a horror at the thought of blaſpheming Chriſt, and openly renouncing all hope of ſalvation from him, and yet the plain tendency of your practice is to harden the hearts of infidels, and give occaſion to the enemies of Chriſtianity to blaſpheme. And ſhould not you tremble to think of being charged as acceſſory to the indignities and reproaches caſt on that venerable name into which you were baptized, and on that excellent ſyſtem of religion, whoſe divine original you profeſs to believe? Surely then it highly concerneth you, for your own ſakes, and that of the goſpel, to ſet yourſelves heartily to reform a conduct ſo irreconcileable to all the rules of reaſon, and to your own moſt evident intereſts. Implore the mercy of God through Jeſus Chriſt, and the aſſiſtances of his grace, which ſhall not be wanting to the truly penitent, and ſhew yourſelves Chriſtians, by endeavouring to get your ſouls effectually brought under the influence of our holy religion, the natural tendency of which, wherever it is ſincerely believed and embraced, is to inſpire an ingenuous hope, confidence, and joy.

I ſhall conclude therefore with laying a few advices before thoſe who take upon them the name of Chriſtians, and who profeſs to receive the goſpel as of divine authority.

And 1. Let us be thankful to God for our glorious privileges. It is our unſpeakable advantage, that we are not left merely to the uncertain lights, or feeble conjectures of our own unaſſiſted reaſon in matters of the higheſt importance. We have God himſelf inſtructing us by his word concerning his own glorious perfections, and his governing providence, as extending to the individuals of the human race, diſplaying all the riches of his grace and goodneſs towards periſhing ſinners, ſetting our duty before us in its juſt extent, and animating us to the practice of it by the moſt exceeding great and precious promiſes, and aſſuring us of the aids of his Holy Spirit to aſſiſt our weak endeavours. We are raiſed to the moſt glorious hopes and views.

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A happineſs is provided for us as the reward of our patient continuance in well-doing, tranſcending all that we are now able to expreſs, or even to conceive. Theſe things certainly call for a devout admiration and adoring thankfulneſs, and for all the returns of love and gratitude that are in our power. Our civil liberties are juſtly to be valued, but our privileges as Chriſtians are of a yet higher and nobler nature.

2dly, Another thing which naturally follows upon this is, that we ſhould conſider and improve the revelation we profeſs to believe, and that we ſhould endeavour to be well acquainted with it, eſpecially as it is contained in the holy Scriptures. There thoſe diſcoveries are to be found which God was pleaſed to make of his will at ſundry times and in divers manners, by the mouth of his holy prophets; but eſpecially there is that laſt and moſt perfect revelation he gave by his well-beloved Son. We are ready to think they had a mighty advantage who ſaw our Saviour in the fleſh, who heard his excellent diſcourſes, and were witneſſes to his holy life, and to the miracles he performed. And in the ſacred writings we have all theſe things faithfully recorded. Thoſe very diſcourſes which he delivered are there tranſmitted to us, with an account of the wonderful works he did, his moſt holy and uſeful life, and moſt perfect example. What a ſtrange inconſiſtent conduct would it be, to profeſs to believe that there is a revelation given from heaven relating to matters of the higheſt moment, and that this revelation is contained in the holy Scriptures, and yet to ſuffer the Bible to lie neglected by us, as if this, which is the moſt worthy of all our attention, were the only book that deſerved no attention at all! Let us therefore ſearch the Scriptures, which are able to make us wiſe unto ſalvation. And if we meet with difficulties there, as may juſtly be expected in ſuch ancient writings, and which relate to a great variety of things, ſome of them of a very extraordinary nature, let not this diſcourage us. For beſides that by a careful conſidering and comparing the Scriptures themſelves, and making a proper uſe of the helps that are afforded us, we may have the ſatisfaction of having many of thoſe difficulties cleared up to us, it muſt be obſerved, that thoſe things that are moſt neceſſary to be known, and which are of the greateſt

importance,

importance, are there moſt plainly revealed, and frequently inculcated; and theſe things we ſhould eſpecially labour to get impreſſed upon our hearts and conſciences.

But that which ſhould be our principal concern, is to take care that our whole converſation be ſuch as becometh the goſpel of Chriſt, worthy of our glorious privileges and ſublime hopes. He muſt be an utter ſtranger to Chriſtianity who is not ſenſible that it lays us under the moſt ſacred obligations, and gives us the greateſt helps and encouragements to a holy and virtuous practice. Let us therefore, as we would ſecure our own ſalvation and happineſs, and would promote the honour of our bleſſed Redeemer, and of the revelation he brought from heaven, endeavour to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour by all the virtues of a ſober, a righteous, and godly life. A mere form of godlineſs will not be ſufficient: the power, the energy, the beauty of religion, muſt appear in our whole temper and conduct. This is in a peculiar manner expected of thoſe who are honoured with the office of the holy miniſtry. But the goſpel is not deſigned merely for any particular order of men, but to extend its influence to perſons of all orders and degrees. And how amiable is the idea of a Chriſtian acting up to the obligations of Chriſtianity!

Conſider him in the exerciſe of piety and devotion towards God, diligent in attending on the ordinances of religion, filled with a profound reverence of the divine Majeſty, with a devout admiration of the ſupreme original Goodneſs and Excellence, his ſoul riſing in grateful emotions towards his ſovereign Benefactor, exerciſing an unrepining ſubmiſſion and reſignation to his will, and a ſteady dependence on his providence, rejoicing in Chriſt Jeſus as his Saviour and Lord, in the beauties of his example, and in the wonders of his love.

But the religion of a real Chriſtian is not confined to immediate acts of devotion. It influenceth and animateth his whole conduct. It teacheth him to render unto all their dues, to be ſtrictly juſt and generouſly honeſt, to behave ſuitably in every relation, the *conjugal*, *parental*, and *filial* relation, and to fulfil the duties of the *civil* and *ſocial* life. It tendeth to ſuppreſs the bitter and malevolent affections, and to diffuſe a ſweetneſs and complacency through his whole behaviour. It maketh him ready

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to bear with the infirmities of others, to rejoice in their happineſs, and endeavour to promote it, and inſtead *of being overcome of evil, to overcome evil with good.*

Behold him in another view, as exerciſing a noble ſelf-government, keeping his appetites and paſſions under a proper diſcipline, and in a regular ſubjection to the laws of religion and reaſon, diſdaining to diſhonour and defile his body and ſoul with unclean luſts, and vicious exceſſes, yet not unreaſonably auſtere, but allowing himſelf the moderate and chearful uſe of the innocent pleaſures and enjoyments of life, and every enjoyment heightened by the glorious proſpects which are before him. To which it may be added, that religion tends to inſpire him with a true ſenſe of honour, as that ſignifieth an abhorrence of every thing baſe, falſe, unjuſt, and impure, and with a real greatneſs of ſoul, and a noble conſtancy and fortitude, not to be *bribed* or *terrified* from his duty.

Such a character, even in a low condition, as far as it hath an opportunity of exerting itſelf, cannot but attract the approbation and eſteem of thoſe that obſerve it. But when it is found in conjunction with *nobility* of *extraction*, *dignity* of *ſtation*, *ſplendour* and *affluence* of fortune, what a glory does it diffuſe! And it gives a real pleaſure to every friend to Chriſtianity among us to reflect, that of this we have an illuſtrious inſtance in a *perſon* of the moſt exalted dignity, but who is ſtill more diſtinguiſhed by her *princely* and *Chriſtian* virtues, than by the *eminency* of her ſtation. We have here a ſhining proof, what a juſt and general eſteem and admiration, ſolid rational piety, a well-regulated zeal for Chriſtianity, and a life amiably conducted by its ſacred rules, in a condition ſo elevated, has a natural tendency to create, and what a *ſplendour* and *beauty* it adds to the higheſt *titles* and *dignities*. And if perſons diſtinguiſhed by their *rank* and *figure* in life were more generally careful to copy after ſo *bright* a pattern, it is to be hoped, this might happily contribute to reform the licentiouſneſs of the age; and that the influence of their authority and example would extend to thoſe inferior ſtations, and have a general good effect; particularly that it would tend to cure that *falſe* and *vicious ſhame*, which has ſo often diſcouraged perſons from openly avowing their regard and adherence to that which is the ornament and glory of our nature, religion and virtue.

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It is proper to obſerve, in the laſt place, that thoſe who have any true zeal for Chriſtianity, and who really believe it to be the moſt excellent religion, are bound by every obligation to endeavour to promote it in their own families, by carefully training up their children to an early acquaintance with this holy religion, and veneration for it. It is of great conſequence to endeavour to ſeaſon their young and tender minds with its important principles, and to inſpire them with a juſt reverence of things ſacred, with a love of goodneſs and virtue, and an abhorrence of what is baſe, falſe, vicious, and impure. The neceſſity of an early good education, and the benefits ariſing from it, have been acknowledged by the beſt and wiſeſt men in all ages. And we have certainly a mighty advantage this way, who enjoy the light of the goſpel-revelation. And therefore it highly concerneth Chriſtian parents to do what they can, that their children may be by times *acquainted with the holy ſcriptures*, and may have the *word of Chriſt dwelling richly* in them. Minds which are early filled and poſſeſſed with the great objects of religion, and with the noble and ſublime hopes of the goſpel, carry about with them the moſt effectual preſervation againſt the vanities and follies, the corrupt cuſtoms and practices, of a ſinful world, and the moſt animating motives to the practice of every amiable virtue, and univerſal righteouſneſs. And yet this, which is the moſt important and moſt eſſential part of a good education, ſeems to be that which is leaſt attended to. For want of this it is, that notwithſtanding the advantages we enjoy, many among us, though they call themſelves Chriſtians, are ſhamefully ignorant of the nature and deſign of Chriſtianity, and even of the firſt principles of the oracles of God. And indeed the general neglect of the education of children, and of family-order and religion, is one of the moſt unhappy ſymptoms of the great degeneracy of the preſent age, and which gives us the moſt melancholy proſpects of the ſucceeding one. For what can be expected from thoſe who are bred up under parents, that take no care to inſtil worthy principles into their minds, and in families where they ſee no ſigns of religion or the fear of God? Unnatural parents! who ſeem to make the real welfare and happineſs of their children, the leaſt of their concern; or, if they take ſome care to adorn their bodies and form their outward behaviour, neglect the culture of their

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better parts, their minds, or at leaſt take no care to train them up to a juſt ſenſe of religion and morals, or to a taſte for what is truly laudable and excellent! Unhappy children! in whom, for want of proper early inſtruction and diſcipline, irregular appetites and paſſions, and evil habits, are daily gathering ſtrength, till at length they are turned out, unfurniſhed with good principles, or worthy ſentiments of things, into a world full of temptations and ſnares. Is it to be wondered at, if ſuch perſons become an eaſy prey to wicked and impious ſeducers, and are ſoon drawn into prophaneneſs and infidelity, and into diſſoluteneſs and debauchery, which, where it prevails, tendeth to corrupt or to extinguiſh true probity and public ſpirit, and every noble and generous affection and ſentiment? And in that caſe, the higher their condition is, and the greater their affluence of fortune, the more pernicious is the contagion of their example; and thoſe who otherwiſe might have been the ornament and ſupport, become the diſgrace and peſt of the community.

On the contrary, how agreeable is it to behold well-regulated families, children bred up in the fear of God, their minds early principled with juſt notions of things, and good affections, and worthy habits, carefully cheriſhed and improved! Thoſe of the one ſex, formed under the influence of religion to a juſt and delicate ſenſe of purity and virtue, and to that modeſty and gentleneſs of manners and behaviour, which hath been always eſteemed one of their loveliеſt ornaments: thoſe of the other, trained up by a proper inſtitution and diſcipline to a rational piety, and the government of their appetites and paſſions, and to a juſt and manly ſenſe of what is truly honourable, virtuous, and praiſeworthy. And here again the ſame great example preſenteth itſelf, of a moſt *eminent perſonage* of the higheſt *dignity*, who, amidſt all the pomps and ſplendours of a court, hath eſteemed it one of her moſt pleaſing employments, to inſpect the education of *her illuſtrious offspring*, and to this hath applied her princely cares and perſonal attendance. And ſurely it muſt be the earneſt wiſh of every good mind, that ſhe may have the ſincere and noble ſatisfaction of ſeeing them grow up under her tender and watchful eye, in every virtue and excellence; which may render them *public ornaments* and *bleſſings*, and diffuſe a beneficial and ex-

tenſive influence, of great uſe in the preſent age, and the effects of which may be tranſmitted to ſucceeding generations.

How happy would it be for theſe nations, if, in conformity to an example ſo juſtly admired, the *great* and *noble* would look upon the care of their children and families to be one of the worthieſt objects of their attention and concern! This could ſcarce fail to have a good effect upon thoſe of the lower rank. Then might we hope to ſee religion and virtue flouriſh, and a new and hopeful generation ſpringing up among us, the ſureſt earneſt of national glory and happineſs. For it is a maxim of undoubted truth, as well as of great importance, That a careful education of children will lay the beſt foundation for well-ordered families, as theſe will contribute the moſt of any thing to the peace and good order of the community.

I ſhall conclude this addreſs with the admirable words of St. Paul: *Finally, brethren, whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever things are juſt, whatſoever things are pure, whatſoever things are lovely, whatſoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praiſe, think on theſe things.*

I have now finiſhed the deſign I undertook, and which hath been carried on to a much greater length than I at firſt deſigned. God grant that what hath been offered in this and the preceding volume, may anſwer the end for which it was ſincerely intended, the ſerving the cauſe of important truth, piety, and virtue in the world, and eſpecially in theſe nations, in which ſuch open inſults have been offered to religion, and particularly to the holy Goſpel of our bleſſed Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. For myſelf, what I deſire above all things, is, that I may feel the power and influence of that excellent religion upon my own ſoul, animating and regulating my conduct in life, ſupporting and comforting me in death, and preparing me for that better ſtate which we are raiſed to the hope of by the goſpel.

APPENDIX,

Containing REFLECTIONS on the preſent State of Things in theſe Nations.

There is a great and growing Corruption in theſe Lands, notwithſtanding the ſignal Advantages we enjoy—This Corruption not juſtly chargeable on our Religion as Chriſtians and Proteſtants, but on the Neglect or Contempt of it—The unaccountable Eagerneſs that hath been ſhewn in ſpreading the principles of Infidelity, of very ill Conſequence to the Public—The Tendency of Irreligion and Vice, to bring Miſery and Ruin upon a People, both in the natural Courſe of Things, and by the juſt Judgments of God—Many things in the late and preſent Courſe of God's Diſpenſations have an alarming Appearance—Repentance and Reformation, and a ſtrict Adherence to the Faith and Practice of Chriſtianity, the propereſt Way of averting the Tokens of the divine Diſpleaſure, and promoting the national Proſperity—The happy State of Things which this would introduce.

THOUGH the following Conſiderations do not directly and immediately relate to the *View of the Deiſtical Writers*, yet they may perhaps come in not improperly as an Appendix to it, and will, I hope, not be thought altogether unſuitable to the general nature and deſign of the preceding work.

It was with great ſatisfaction that I read the order for a *General* and *Public Faſt*, to be religiouſly obſerved by all his Majeſty's ſubjects in theſe kingdoms, and which is drawn up with great ſeriouſneſs and ſolemnity. It is there acknowledged, that *the manifold ſins and wickedneſs of theſe kingdoms have moſt juſtly deſerved heavy and ſevere puniſhments from the hand of heaven.* We are called upon to *humble ourſelves before almighty God, and in a moſt devout and ſolemn manner to ſend up our*

prayers and ſupplications to the divine, Majeſty, to avert all thoſe judgments; which we moſt juſtly have deſerved, to continue his mercies, and perpetuate the enjoyment of the Proteſtant religion among us, and ſafety and proſperity to his Majeſty's kingdoms and dominions.

Having ſo great an authority to bear me out, I ſhall add ſome reflections, which have made a deep impreſſion upon my mind, with reference to the preſent ſtate of things among us.

We have been eminently diſtinguiſhed above moſt other nations by happy privileges and advantages. Providence hath bleſſed us with an abundance of thoſe things, which are uſually thought to contribute to the public proſperity and happineſs. Never had any people a fuller enjoyment of liberty; a profuſion of wealth has flowed in upon us by our wide-extended commerce. We have had great advantages for improvement in the arts and ſciences, and every branch of uſeful knowledge: eſpecially that which is the moſt valuable and important of all others, the knowledge of religion in its truth and purity. The light of the glorious goſpel of Chriſt, freed from the abſurdities, the ſuperſtitions, and idolatries with which it hath been incumbered in many other countries profeſſing the Chriſtian Faith, hath long ſhone among us. The holy Scriptures are not locked up in an unknown tongue, nor confined to the ſtudies of the learned, but are put into the hands of the people: ſo that all men may have acceſs to that ſacred rule of faith and practice, the original ſtandard of the Chriſtian religion. The treaſures of knowledge are opened, and the public inſtructions ſo frequently and freely diſpenſed, that it may be ſaid, that *wiſdom crieth without, ſhe uttereth her voice in the ſtreets.*

It might be expected, that a people ſo diſtinguiſhed by advantages for religious and moral improvement, ſhould alſo be remarkably diſtinguiſhed by the knowledge and practice of piety, wiſdom, and virtue, and by a zeal for our holy religion. But though it is to be hoped there are many among us, who are unfeignedly thankful for our inеſtimable privileges, and careful to make a right improvement of them, yet it cannot be denied, that a great corruption hath ſpread itſelf, and ſeems to be growing among all orders and degrees of men. This is a very diſ-

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agreeable ſubject; but the firſt ſtep to a proper remedy is to be duly ſenſible of the true ſtate of our own caſe. Our wealth and plenty hath been abuſed to an amazing luxury, and our liberty to a boundleſs licentiouſneſs. Many act as if they had no other way of ſhewing that they are free, but by caſting off all reſtraints, and ſetting themſelves looſe from all the ties of religion and virtue. Atheiſm hath appeared almoſt without diſguiſe; or, which in effect comes to the ſame thing, the diſbelief of a *Providence, of God's moral attributes* and *government*, and of a *future ſtate*. The moſt virulent reproach and contempt hath been caſt upon the adorable Jeſus, and the methods of our *redemption* and *ſalvation* by him. All that part of our duty, which more immediately relateth to the ſupreme Being, ſeemeth to be regarded by many as a matter of indifference. And the ſlighteſt obſervation may convince us, that there is a growing neglect of *public worſhip*, as if the propereſt way of ſhewing our gratitude to God, for the glorious privilege we have of worſhipping him according to the dictates of our own conſciences, were not to render him any public homage or religious worſhip at all. That *holy day*, which is by divine appointment, and by that of our own laws, ſet apart from worldly buſineſſes and cares, for the purpoſes of religion, for receiving public inſtructions, and for attending on divine worſhip, hath been treated with great contempt. And in this too many of thoſe who, by their authority and influence, ſhould ſet a good example to others, have unhappily led the way. Can there be a greater contempt caſt upon it, than to hold *gaming aſſemblies* on that day? And when this is done by perſons of *rank*, can it be wondered at, that by the lower kind of people it is often the worſt employed of any day in the week, and devoted to idleneſs and vice? And it cannot but give concern to every good mind, that an *inſtitution*, ſo admirably calculated for the advancement of religious knowledge, piety, and virtue, and for promoting good order in the community, ſhould be ſo ſtrangely perverted and abuſed.

Having mentioned the practice of *gaming*, I cannot help obſerving, that among other unfavourable ſymptoms of the growing corruption among us, this is not the leaſt, that that practice is of late years become more general, and carried to a greater

exceſs, than has been known before in theſe kingdoms. The wiſeſt men of all nations have been ſo ſenſible both of the pernicious effects of this vice to particular perſons and families, and its ill influence on the community, that it would fill a large volume barely to recite the laws which have been made againſt it, both in former and latter ages. Our own laws have fixed a brand upon it, and in effect declared the gain made by it to be diſhonourable and infamous; yet is the being inſtructed in the myſteries of it become a neceſſary part of education, whilſt the ſeaſoning the tender minds of young perſons with principles of religion and juſt ſentiments of things, and forming them to the worthieſt practices, is, it is to be feared, in a great meaſure neglected.

But what affordeth the moſt melancholy apprehenſions is, the great corruption and depravity of manners which is ſo generally and juſtly complained of.—The moſt blaſphemous abuſe of the name of God, by ſhocking *oaths* and *imprecations*, and the moſt corrupt and wilful *perjuries*, *drunkenneſſes*, and exceſſes of riot, but eſpecially by the exceſſive drinking of *diſtilled ſpirituous liquors*, the *health*, *morals*, and *religion* of the laborious and uſeful part of theſe kingdoms are well-nigh deſtroyed. Fired with this infernal poiſon, they are ſpirited to perpetrate and execute the moſt bold, daring, and miſchievous enterprizes, and, ſhaking off all *fear* and *ſhame*, become audaciouſly impudent in all manner of *vice*, *lewdneſs*, *immorality*, and *prophaneneſs*, in defiance of all laws human and divine. But it doth not ſtop here: its malignant influence reaches to the children yet unborn, who come half burnt-up and ſhrivelled into the world, and who, as ſoon as born, ſuck in this deadly poiſon with their mother's or nurſe's milk: ſo that if this worſt of all plagues be ſuffered to go on, it will make a general havock, eſpecially amongſt the *ſoldiers*, *ſailors*, and *laborious* part of the nation, who are manifeſtly degenerated from the more manly conſtitutions of preceding generations †. Beſides an amazing diſſoluteneſs, and impurities of all

† See *Diſtilled Spirituous Liquors the Bane of the Nation*, 8vo, 2d. edit. 1736, London. Dr. Stephen Hales's *Friendly Admonition to the Drinkers of Gin, Brandy, and other ſpirituous Liquors, which are ſo deſtructive of the Induſtry, Morals, Health, and Lives of the People*—a new edition with additions, and an

all kinds, even thoſe that are moſt *unnatural*, and which are not fit to be named amongſt Chriſtians. To which may be added the horrid crime of *ſelf-murder*, not only frequently practiſed, but pleaded for: a practice deſervedly rendered infamous by our laws, as being a murder committed by a man upon his own perſon, in oppoſition not only to the moſt ſacred obligations of religion, and the rights of the community, but to the ſtrongeſt inſtincts of the human nature, wiſely implanted in us by the great author of our beings, as a bar to ſuch monſtrous practices.—To all which may be added, that barbarous practice of men's murdering one another, upon a pretended *point of honour*, as it is called, for the moſt ſlight and trivial offences, below the cognizance of our laws:—A crime inexcuſable in a civilized country, and which yet generally paſſes unpuniſhed, and thus leaves the guilt of blood upon the land, crying aloud for vengeance.—It is impoſſible for a thinking man, that has a true zeal for the honour of God and the

an appendix; and is in the catalogue of the books diſtributed by the ſociety for promoting Chriſtian Knowledge, London.—This worthy divine and excellent philoſopher (whoſe whole life has been uſefully employed in promoting the honour of God and the welfare of mankind), in a treatiſe upon the diſtilling of ſea-water, and the uſe of ventilators, &c. juſt publiſhed, ſpeaking of diſtilled ſpirituous liquors, ſays—"How much therefore does "it behove all, who have any concern for the honour and dignity of "their own kindred ſpecies, any indignation at its being thus debaſed and "diſgraced, any bowels of pity for the vaſt multitudes, not leſs perhaps than "a million, that are yearly deſtroyed all over the world, by the moral as "well as natural, and therefore worſt of all evils, that ever befel unhappy "man; to uſe their utmoſt endeavours to deliver mankind from the *peſt*! "But notwithſtanding this aſtoniſhing ravage and deſtruction of the hu-"man ſpecies, yet the unhappy unrelenting nations of the world ſeem as un-"concerned about it, as if only ſo many *thouſands*, nay *millions*, *of caterpillars* "*or locuſts* were deſtroyed thereby. Was there ever a more important "occaſion to rouſe the indignation of mankind? Can we be calm and un-"diſturbed, when this *mighty deſtroyer* rears up its envenomed head? The "moſt zealous advocates for *drams*, even the unhappy beſotted *Dramiſts* "themſelves, the prolonging of whoſe lives, and whoſe real welfare both *here* "and *hereafter*, is hereby ſincerely intended, cannot find fault with this well-"meant remonſtrance, in defence of them and of all mankind, againſt this "univerſal deſtroyer, from *one* who has long been labouring, and that not "without ſucceſs, in finding means to preſerve multitudes of lives, by va-"rious means."

intereſts of religion and virtue, and who hath the welfare and happineſs of his country really at heart, not to be deeply affected with ſuch a view of things, and ſolicitous what the conſequence may prove.

And now it is a natural inquiry, what can this be owing to? Whence can it be, that nations ſo happily privileged, and favoured with ſo many advantages for the knowledge and practice of religion, ſhould have ſunk into ſuch an amazing corruption and degeneracy? Can this be conſiſtently charged on religion itſelf, either the Chriſtian religion or the Proteſtant, which is the religion of Jeſus, as taught in the holy ſcriptures, and freed from the abuſes and corruptions that have been brought into it? The deiſts have pretended the firſt, the enemies to the reformation the laſt. The anſwer to both is in effect the ſame. Can that be the cauſe of corruptions among Chriſtians, which, if ſteadily adhered to, is the beſt remedy againſt thoſe corruptions? Can that occaſion an abounding in vice and wickedneſs, which, if really believed and ſeriouſly conſidered, exhibiteth the moſt powerful diſſuaſives from it that can enter into the human mind? Can the furniſhing the people with the means of knowledge, and bringing them to an acquaintance with the holy ſcriptures, which are able to make us *wiſe unto ſalvation*, and are *profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs*, can this have any tendency to encourage them in vice and diſſoluteneſs? Such a ſuppoſition is contrary to the plaineſt dictates of common ſenſe. The corruption therefore complained of can never be the natural effect or product of our advantages, and eſpecially of the religion we profeſs. On the contrary, the beſt and ſureſt preſervative againſt this growing corruption, and the moſt effectual way of recovering from it, would be to have a high eſteem for thoſe divine oracles, to read and conſider them with attention, and to lay to heart the excellent inſtructions and directions which are there ſet before us.

There is a far more natural account to be given of that corruption of manners, that vice and wickedneſs which ſo much aboundeth among us. It is owing not to the knowledge or belief of religion, but to the neglect or contempt of it; to a ſtrange indifference towards it in ſome, whilſt others uſe their utmoſt endeavours to traduce and expoſe it under the vilifying charac-

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ters of ſuperſtition, prieſtcraft, or enthuſiaſm. Great numbers of impious books have ſwarmed among us, both formerly and of late: ſome of which are not only levelled againſt Chriſtianity, but ſtrike at the foundations of all religion, the attributes and providence of God, and a future ſtate of retribution. The manifeſt tendency of them has been to baniſh the fear of the Deity, to confound the moral differences of things, to degrade the human nature to a level with the brutes, and thereby extinguiſh every noble and generous ſentiment, to deprive good men of the bleſſed hope of immortality, and to free bad men from the fears of future puniſhments, and the apprehenſions of a ſupreme Governor and Judge. Theſe principles, and the books that contain them, have been propagated with great eagerneſs and induſtry, both in theſe kingdoms, and in our plantations abroad, and ſometimes at a conſiderable expence. This prepoſterous kind of zeal for infidelity may, to a conſiderate obſerver, ſeem to be an odd phænomenon, of which no rational account can be given. One may, in ſome degree, account for a man's being hurried away by the violence of his appetites and paſſions, to do what his own mind diſapproves and condemns: but that any man ſhould coolly take pains to ſet other men looſe from all the reſtraints of religion and conſcience, and thereby, as far as in him lies, attempt to diſſolve the bands of ſociety and public order, and encourage men to gratify and fulfil their appetites and paſſions without controul, the natural conſequence of which would be to introduce univerſal confuſion, in which he himſelf may be a great ſufferer, is abſolutely unaccountable on any principles of good ſenſe or ſound policy; ſo that if we did not ſee frequent inſtances of it, we ſhould be apt to think it ſcarce poſſible, that any men in their ſenſes ſhould act ſo ſtrange a part.

One very pernicious conſequence of ſuch open attempts againſt religion is, the ſpreading prophaneneſs and diſſoluteneſs of manners among the *lower* kind of people, who eaſily catch the contagion, when once men of *higher degree*, or at leaſt that pretend to a ſuperior ſagacity, have ſet the example. And who can, with deep concern, obſerve, that this is very much become the caſe among us at preſent? Great numbers of thoſe who belong to what ought to be the moſt induſtrious body of the people, are ſunk into irreligion and vice: and in proportion

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as theſe prevail, they become averſe to all honeſt labour and induſtry, and prone to the moſt flagitious crimes, which have the worſt effect imaginable on the peace and good order of the community. And it is eaſy to ſee what miſchief and confuſion muſt thence enſue. A ſober and induſtrious populace is the ſtrength, the riches, the glory of a nation: but when thoſe, that ſhould be the labouring hands, become vicious and diſſolute, they are prepared for every kind of wickedneſs and diſorder. As, from their rank and education, they have, for the moſt part, little regard to the appearances of honour and decency, if at the ſame time they have caſt off the ties of religion, and the fear of God, and a regard to the powers of the world to come, and are abandoned to their appetites and paſſions, what are they not capable of? It is an obſervation which hath generally held, and is verified by the experience of all ages, that *righteouſneſs exalteth a nation, but ſin* (i. e. abounding vice and wickedneſs) *is a reproach unto any people* (i. e. it bringeth diſgrace and miſery upon them), Prov. xiii. 10. When once a neglect of religion and a corruption of manners become general, they have a natural tendency to diſſolve and enervate a nation, and to extinguiſh true public ſpirit and a manly fortitude. Nor have any people long maintained their liberties, after having loſt their probity and virtue.

Thus it is in the natural courſe of things, and thus it alſo is by the juſt judgment of God, and according to the ſtated rules of the divine procedure towards nations or large communities. God may indeed, in his great wiſdom and goodneſs, long bear with a degenerate people, and may even continue to pour forth many bleſſings upon them when they are in a corrupt ſtate, eſpecially if there be a conſiderable remnant of good men ſtill to be found among them. But when their iniquities are grown up to ſuch a height, and have continued ſo long, that he doth not ſee fit to bear with them any longer, the meaſure of their iniquities is ſaid to be full; the time is come for executing a ſevere vengeance upon them, and the puniſhment falls heavier for being ſo long delayed.

Whoſoever duly conſidereth theſe things will be apt to think, that, according to the ordinary method of God's providential dealings towards backſliding nations and churches, we have too much reaſon to apprehend his righteous judgments. The preſent

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ſituation of things hath an alarming appearance, and, if we be not utterly ſtupid, muſt tend to awaken us out of our ſecurity. Scarce ever was there a time in which it might be more juſtly ſaid, that *God's judgments are abroad in the earth*. I need not enter into particulars: they are very well known, and freſh in our remembrance. There have been, to uſe our Saviour's emphatical expreſſions, *commotions and great earthquakes in divers places,—diſtreſs of nations with perplexity, the ſea and the waves roaring: men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after thoſe things that ſhall come upon the earth.* Luke xxi. 9. 11. 25. Of ſo vaſt an extent have the amazing concuſſions been, reaching to many parts of Europe, Africa, and America, at a great diſtance from one another, and in divers places have produced ſuch dreadful effects, even to the ſubverſion of great and populous cities, that it looketh as if God were about ſome great and remarkable work of judgment, *to puniſh the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquities*, as the prophet expreſſeth it, Iſ. xiii. 11. Surely every man, who believeth that there is a Providence which extendeth its care to mankind, muſt believe that it hath a ſpecial concernment in events of ſuch a nature, which ſo nearly affect nations and large communities, and on which the lives and fortunes of ſo many thouſands depend. Though ſecond cauſes are admitted, ſtill it muſt be conſidered, that they are all under the direction and ſuperintendence of God's ſovereign providence, which ſo ordereth and over-ruleth the circumſtances of things, and the courſe of natural cauſes, as to ſubſerve the ends of his moral adminiſtration with regard to his reaſonable creatures, and to execute his purpoſes towards them, whether in a way of judgment or of mercy. And, in every ſuch caſe, we ſhould fix our views not merely or principally on ſecond cauſes, but ſhould look above them to the ſupreme Diſpoſer, and endeavour to compoſe with the deſigns of his infinite wiſdom and righteouſneſs. Calamitous events of a public nature are not to be conſidered as concerning only the particular perſons or people that immediately ſuffer by them. They have a more extenſive view, and are deſigned and fitted to give inſtructive leſſons to all mankind that hear them. The natural tendency of all ſuch diſpenſations is to awaken in the minds of men a holy fear of the divine Majeſty, and to give them a moſt affecting

ing conviction of the vanity and inſtability of all worldly hopes and dependencies. The prophet Iſaiah, after having deſcribed in a very lively manner the ſtriking impreſſions that ſhould be made upon the hearts of men becauſe of *the fear of the Lord, and the glory of his Majeſty, when he ariſeth to ſhake terribly the earth*, very properly adds, *Ceaſe ye from man whoſe breath is in his noſtrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?* Iſ. xi. 20, 21. Of what avail, in ſuch a time of awful viſitation, are the arts of human policy, the pomp of courts, or the power of mighty armies, or the riches and grandeur of the moſt populous and magnificent cities? The plain voice of ſuch diſpenſations, a voice intelligible to all mankind, is this: *Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world ſtand in awe of him.* Pſal. xxxiii. 8. *The Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlaſting King: at his wrath the earth ſhall tremble; and the nations ſhall not be able to abide his indignation.* Jer. x. 10. Surely we ſhould be ready to cry out on ſuch occaſions, *Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, juſt and true are thy ways, thou King of ſaints. Who would not fear thee, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy. For all nations ſhall come and worſhip before thee: for thy judgments are made manifeſt.* Rev. xv. 3, 4. The great uſe which is to be made of ſuch awful diſpenſations, is well expreſſed by the prophet Iſaiah, xxvi. 9. *When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteouſneſs*; i. e. they ought to do ſo; and it is the natural tendency of ſuch judgments to engage them to do ſo. The calamities inflicted upon others ſhould be regarded by us as ſolemn warnings and admonitions, which it highly concerneth us to improve. The language of ſuch diſpenſations to all that hear of them, is the ſame with that of our Saviour to the Jews, when ſpeaking of thoſe perſons on whom the tower of Siloam fell, and of thoſe whoſe blood Pilate mingled with their ſacrifices, *Except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.* Luke xiii. 3. 5. How inexcuſable ſhall we therefore be, if, inſtead of laying theſe things ſeriouſly to heart, we continue careleſs and unaffected ſtill, and go on in a thoughtleſs round of gaieties and pleaſures, like thoſe the prophet mentions, Iſ. v. 12. *The harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine are in their feaſts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither conſider the operation*

operation of his hands. Againſt ſuch perſons a ſolemn woe is there denounced. And elſewhere, ſpeaking of ſome who continued to indulge themſelves in luxury and riot, and all kinds of ſenſual mirth, at a time when the circumſtances of things called for deep humiliation and repentance, he ſaith, *It was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hoſts, Surely this iniquity ſhall not be purged from you till ye die, ſaith the Lord God of hoſts.* Iſ. xxii. 12, 13, 14.

Whoſoever carefully obſerveth the courſe of the divine diſpenſations towards us for ſome time paſt, will be ſenſible that we have had many warnings given us. A peſtilence amongſt the cattle in England for many years paſt, and though abated, ſtill continues in ſome parts of this country. But a few years ago the ſword of war raged in one part of the united kingdom of Great Britain, and was near penetrating to the centre of it, and threatened the ſubverſion of that conſtitution, on which the preſervation of our religion, laws, and liberties, in a great meaſure dependeth: but, through the great goodneſs of God, our fears were, after ſome time, happily diſpelled. More lately encroachments have been made upon our poſſeſſions and plantations abroad, in which our national ſafety and proſperity is very nearly intereſted. And now it is not many weeks ſince a moſt dreadful calamity hath befallen a kingdom, ſo very nearly connected with us in intereſt and alliance, that the calamity may be regarded as, in a conſiderable degree, our own. And in fact, we have been and are great ſufferers by it. Many lives have been loſt of his Majeſty's ſubjects belonging to Great Britain and Ireland, and many more there are, who, by the ſudden ſubverſion, have either been totally, or in a conſiderable degree, deprived of their worldly ſubſtance, and reduced to circumſtances of diſtreſs. A preſent ſtop is put to the courſe of a moſt advantageous commerce. The ſprings of our wealth are obſtructed; a great blow is ſtruck at our trade, in which we are ſo apt to place our confidence: and this at the very time when we ſeem to be entering upon a war with a mighty nation, a war that threatens to be very hazardous, and which muſt needs put us to a vaſt expence, which we are not very well able to bear. That particular judgment, under which ſome of the neighbouring nations have ſo ſeverely ſuffered, and which is one of the

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moſt dreadful of all others, hath greatly threatened us. It is but a very few years ſince that great city, which is the metropolis of theſe kingdoms, and the centre of our wealth and commerce, felt an alarming ſhock, though, through the great mercy of God, it did little more than threaten and terrify. Since that time, and very lately, there have been ſeveral very unuſual phænomena among us, of ſuch a nature as to have a threatening aſpect: extraordinary agitations of the waters both on our coaſts and within land, and ſhocks of an earthquake felt in ſeveral parts of Great Britain and Ireland, and of his Majeſty's dominions abroad.

Thus the divine judgments ſeem to be advancing upon us, and have gradually begun to operate. But ſuch is the mercy and forbearance of God towards us, that he ſeems loth to inflict upon us the fierceneſs of his anger, or to pour forth all his wrath. He is pleaſed to give us previous warnings, to awaken and rouze us out of our ſecurity, that by a timely repentance, and by humbling ourſelves under his mighty hand, we may prevent the neceſſity of inflicting ſeverer puniſhments. His hand is lifted up, but the awful ſtroke ſeemeth to be ſuſpended for a while, as if he were unwilling to proceed to extremities with us. Upon conſidering theſe things, that moſt affecting expoſtulation comes to my mind, which God condeſcended to make by his prophet Hoſea, with regard to his people Iſrael, when in a very dangerous backſliding ſtate. *How ſhall I give thee up, Ephraim? How ſhall I deliver thee up, Iſrael? How ſhall I make thee as Admah? How ſhall I ſet thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceneſs of mine anger; I will not return to deſtroy Ephraim: For I am God, and not man, the Holy One in the midſt of thee.* Hoſ. xi. 8, 9. Yet we find at length, upon their obſtinately perſiſting in their diſobedience and ingratitude, and abuſing the methods of his indulgence, and even growing more and more corrupted, he ſaw it neceſſary to execute his awful judgments upon them, even to the utter ſubverting that kingdom, and ſubjecting it to a foreign yoke. God forbid that this ſhould be our caſe! Let us therefore make a right uſe of the divine forbearance. We have hitherto had reaſon to ſing *of mercy as well as of judgment.* Let us not, by our abuſe

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of his goodneſs, provoke him to pour forth upon us the full vials of his penal wrath. With an ingenuous ſorrow and ſelf-abaſement we ſhould acknowledge our aggravated tranſgreſſions, our neglect and abuſe of the privileges and advantages we have ſo long enjoyed, the contempt that hath been caſt on his glorious goſpel, and the prophaneneſs and diſſoluteneſs of manners, which hath ſo much prevailed. On theſe accounts, let us humble ourſelves deeply before God, and implore his mercy, and contribute, as far as in us lieth, to the carrying on a work of national repentance and reformation. It is undoubtedly our duty, in the preſent conjuncture of affairs, when we ſeem to be entering upon an hazardous and expenſive war, to exert our utmoſt efforts for aſſiſting and ſupporting the government, and to apply ourſelves to the uſe of all proper means which human prudence may ſuggeſt. But ſtill we muſt get this fixed upon our minds, that whatever projects may be formed for procuring national advantages, and promoting the public proſperity, all other expedients to make a people flouriſh, without reformation of manners, and without the knowledge and practice of religion and public virtue, however they may ſeem to have an effect for a while, will, in the iſſue, prove ineffectual and vain.

The moſt proper way we can take to avert impending judgments, to preſerve and maintain our valuable privileges, and promote the public welfare and happineſs, is, not to expreſs a clamorous zeal for liberty at the ſame time that we abuſe it to an unreſtrained licentiouſneſs, than which nothing hath a greater tendency, both through the righteous judgment of God, and in the nature of the thing, to deprive us of our liberties; but it is to endeavour to make a juſt and wiſe improvement of our advantages, to maintain a ſtrict regard to *religion*, *probity*, and *purity of manners*, and to guard againſt *vice*, *libertiniſm*, *prophaneneſs*, and *debauchery*. This, and this alone, will preſerve us a free, a flouriſhing, and happy people. God grant that this may be the bleſſing of theſe nations to the lateſt poſterity; and that we may long enjoy the light of the glorious goſpel of Chriſt ſhining among us in its genuine purity, and the ineſtimable advantage of a freedom to profeſs it, and to worſhip God according to the directions of his word, and the dictates of our own conſciences, without being expoſed to perſecuting rage and violence!

violence! Happy nations that we ſtill are! if we be but duly ſenſible of our happineſs! and careful to make a right uſe of our privileges! What a glorious face of things would ſoon appear among us, if, as we have the beſt religion in the world, we took care to govern ourſelves by its ſacred rules, and to act under the influence of its divine inſtructions and important motives! Virtue, ſupported and animated by the glorious hopes of the goſpel, would appear in its genuine ſacred charms, and in its lovely beauty and excellence. Love, the true ſpirit of Chriſtianity, would prevail, and produce a mutual forbearance in leſſer differences, at the ſame time that there would be a happy agreement in matters of the higheſt importance; there would be a zeal without bigotry, a liberty without licentiouſneſs. The natural conſequence of all this would be peace and harmony in larger and leſſer ſocieties. Such would be the face of things among us, as far as could be expected in this ſtate of imperfection, if the religion of Jeſus were firmly believed, and duly conſidered, and men would be more generally perſuaded to give up themſelves to its divine conduct. This would render perſons in *high ſtations* ſignally uſeful to the public, and *ornaments* as well as *ſupports* to their country. And at the ſame time *ſobriety*, *induſtry*, *temperance*, and *good order*, would ſpread among the body of the people. Nor would *true bravery* and *fortitude* be wanting. For though *ſuperſtition* tendeth to produce *mean* and *unmanly* fears, *true religion*, and a *ſteady belief* of a *wiſe* and *righteous Providence*, hath a tendency to fortify and eſtabliſh the mind, and to produce a real *courage* and *greatneſs of ſoul*, which will enable a man to meet death with a calm intrepidity in a noble and juſt cauſe, and ſtand the ſhock of the greateſt terrors.

It is a reflection which hath frequently occurred to my mind, eſpecially on occaſion of the late dreadful judgments of God, how different, under the apprehenſion or preſſure of an amazing calamity, muſt be the ſtate of *one* that firmly believeth Chriſtianity, and endeavoureth to govern his practice by its excellent rules, from that of the atheiſt and unbeliever, or of the man who, though he profeſſeth to believe the Chriſtian religion, liveth in a plain contradiction to its ſacred obligations. The former, however black and diſaſtrous the face of things may appear to be, which naturally tend to create fears in the human

mind,

mind, yet is perſuaded, that all things are under the direction of infinite wiſdom, righteouſneſs, and goodneſs, and that we live in a world where every thing, above, beneath, and on every ſide of us, is in the hand of God, and under the direction of his Providence; who, as he can arm all his creatures againſt us, and make them the inſtruments of his juſt diſpleaſure; ſo, if we be careful to pleaſe him, and approve ourſelves in his ſight, can make the whole creation around us to be as it were in a covenant of peace and friendſhip with us. Or, if a good man be involved in the ſame outward calamities with others, as muſt often, without a miracle, be expected, in calamities which happen to large communities, ſtill he hath this to ſupport him, that the great Lord of the univerſe is his father and his friend, and will cauſe thoſe outward evils to turn, in the final iſſue, to his greateſt benefit. Death itſelf, if this ſhall befal him, ſhall prove a real gain to him, and ſhall introduce him to a better world, and a nobler ſociety. It is juſtly obſerved concerning the *man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments*, that *he ſhall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, truſting in the Lord*, Pſal. cxi. 1. 7. Not only may he ſay, upon good grounds, with the Pſalmiſt, *The Lord is on my ſide, I will not fear: what can man do unto me?* Pſal. cxviii. 6. And again, *Though an hoſt ſhould encamp againſt me, my heart ſhall not fear; though war ſhould riſe againſt me, in this will I be confident*, Pſal. xxvii. 2. But he may break forth into that noble ſtrain of triumph, *God is our refuge, and ſtrength, a very preſent help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midſt of the ſea: though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, and though the mountains ſhake with the ſwelling thereof*, Pſal. xlvi. 1, 2, 3. On the other hand the wicked and ungodly man, continuing ſuch, hath no proper reſource, no ſolid comfort or ſupport in a day of calamity, when all things ſeem black and diſmal about him. For either he looketh upon them to be the effects of a *wild chance*, or *blind neceſſity*, which cannot poſſibly be the object of a rational truſt and confidence, and which leaves no room for hope; but in that which nature hath an abhorrence of, an utter extinction of being: or, he apprehendeth them to be the juſt judgments of the wiſe and righteous gover-

nor of the world, whom he hath offended by his ſins. And vain it is to brave it againſt the wrath of heaven. Not to fear creatures like ourſelves, in a juſt cauſe, argueth a noble and manly fortitude: but not to fear God, the Almighty Lord of the univerſe, is not courage, but madneſs. The only proper thing which remaineth for ſuch perſons to do, and it is what reaſon, as well as ſcripture, directeth to, is to humble themſelves deeply under the mighty hand of God, and to flee to his infinite mercy, through Jeſus Chriſt, in a hearty compliance with the moſt reaſonable and gracious terms which he hath appointed, for obtaining an intereſt in his grace and favour.

Upon the whole, the beſt thing that can be wiſhed for the honour of God, for the happineſs of mankind, and for the real welfare of our country, is, that a hearty zeal for the knowledge and practice of our holy religion may have a revival among us; and that perſons of all orders and conditions may join in contributing to promote its ſacred intereſts. And notwithſtanding the corruption too juſtly complained of, there are many, I am perſuaded, among us, and may the number of them daily increaſe! who are earneſtly deſirous to do this. Every man hath it in his power to contribute ſomething towards it, at leaſt by endeavouring to *walk in a converſation becoming the goſpel.* But there are ſome perſons who have peculiar advantages for doing honour and ſervice to Chriſtianity. Thoſe eſpecially that are diſtinguiſhed by their *high rank*, their *fortune*, and *quality*, ſhould make uſe of the influence this gives them for recommending and promoting true religion and virtue, which will add a luſtre to their *titles* and *dignities*, and is one of the beſt ways they can take to ſhew their regard to the public happineſs. Magiſtrates ſhould account it their duty and their honour to employ the authority they are inveſted with, for ſerving the intereſts of religion, and diſcountenancing vice and wickedneſs; ſince for this purpoſe they are appointed, that they *may be for the puniſhment of evil-doers, and for the praiſe of them that do well.* And it is then that their authority will have its proper influence, when it is ſtrengthened by that of their own good example. But, above all, they who are honoured with the character of the *miniſters* of the holy Jeſus ſhould make it the very buſineſs of their lives to ſpread and promote real vital Chriſtianity, to inſtruct the people in its important

important doctrines, and build them up in their moſt holy faith, and to enforce upon them the excellent duties it enjoins, by all the powerful and moſt engaging motives which the goſpel ſets before us. And that their inſtructions may have the proper effect, it highly concerneth them to keep themſelves free from the *faſhionable vices* and *follies* of the age, and to endeavour to be enſamples to their flocks, by a well-tempered zeal, piety and charity, and the virtues of a holy life. Thus will they not only do the higheſt ſervice to religion, but procure the greateſt honour to themſelves, and the moſt juſt veneration for their ſacred character, which, where it is not diſgraced by a conduct unworthy of it, naturally demandeth the eſteem and regard of all the true friends to religion and virtue.

For theſe valuable and excellent purpoſes, may the God of all grace pour forth his holy ſpirit upon all orders and degrees of men in theſe nations, that, as they bear the honourable name of Chriſtians, they may *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things;* and, *being filled with the knowledge of his will in all wiſdom and ſpiritual underſtanding, may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleaſing; being fruitful in every good work.*

I may be thought perhaps to have inſiſted too largely upon theſe things. But I cannot but think, that one of the principal things which ought to be propoſed in books written in defence of Chriſtianity, ſhould be not merely to promote the ſpeculative belief of it, but to engage men to that which is the main deſign of its excellent doctrines, as well as precepts—a holy and a virtuous practice.

APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

A VIEW OF THE PRESENT TIMES,

WITH REGARD TO RELIGION AND MORALS.

By W. L. BROWN,

PRINCIPAL OF MARISCHAL COLLEGE, PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY, AND MINISTER OF GREYFRIARS CHURCH, ABERDEEN.

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APPENDIX,

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INTRODUCTION.

THE principles, contained in the preceding Appendix, are not only juſt and ſalutary in themſelves, but have been ſingularly illuſtrated and enforced by the events which have happened on the grand theatre of human affairs, ſince it was written. As the conſideration of theſe events, and of the moſt prominent cauſes which have produced them, muſt ſtrongly tend to awake the dormant attention of mankind to religious concerns, and, particularly, to the great and important doctrines of Chriſtianity, it appears highly proper at this time, and on occaſion of a new edition of Leland's moſt excellent work, to take a curſory view of the awful diſpenſations of divine Providence which a ſhort courſe of years has exhibited to an aſtoniſhed world, and to beſtow ſome ſerious reflection on the principles and conduct which they ſo ſtrongly inculcate on all ranks and conditions of men. This ſhall be the chief ſubject of this additional Appendix. Its comprehenſive nature, its intimate connexion with the higheſt intereſts of mankind, and its peculiar relation to the preſent times, would demand both a fuller diſcuſſion than is compatible with the limits of this paper, and greater abilities than the writer of it pretends to poſſeſs. Such, however, as it is, it may do ſome good, and with this view ſolely it was compoſed.

The conſiderations, now to be preſented to the reader, ariſe directly from the contemplation of the preſent ſtate of Europe, and thoſe ſtriking convulſions and revolutions which it exhibits.

Religion,

Religion, not politics, is the writer's object. But, as religious concerns have been ſtrongly affected by political agitations, and as an irreligious ſpirit has much contributed to produce the moſt dreadful calamities of the times, it is neceſſary, to the end in view, to direct a conſiderable portion of attention to the political world, and to ſurvey its moſt remarkable appearances.

That the groſs corruptions of Chriſtianity, which have ſo long prevailed in countries called Chriſtian, have, on the one hand, powerfully contributed to the rejection of all religious principle, and to the dreadful diſorders which this has occaſioned, will not be queſtioned by any perſon of diſcernment who is, in the ſmalleſt degree, acquainted with the preſent, and preceding, ſtate of theſe countries. On the other hand, the uncertain ſpeculations of pretended philoſophy, in contempt of the ſure and ſalutary dictates of divine truth, even in countries where acceſs is opened to the beſt ſources of religious information, have been productive of the moſt fatal conſequences to morals, and to the happineſs of civil ſociety, which reſts on no other foundation, but public and private virtue. Pure and genuine Chriſtianity, unknown or deſpiſed, has failed to produce its bleſſed fruits on the earth. Its ſhadow and external form only have been preſerved among the greater part of Chriſtian nations; and, even among thoſe where its ſubſtance is to be found, its pure inſtruction, its power, its ſpirit, and its practice, are confined within very narrow bounds, while diſſipation, immorality, and unreſtrained licentiouſneſs, reign through the greater part of the community. The time is now come when the *judgments of God in the earth* are proclaimed with ſuch a loud and terrific voice, that they muſt rouſe the moſt inattentive, convince the moſt prejudiced, and, one ſhould alſo think, bend the moſt obdurate *to learn righteouſneſs*. In order to impreſs this awful truth more ſtrongly on the reader's mind, it will be proper to conſider the principal events of the preſent time, to attend to the inſtruction which they convey; and to ſhew the admirable tendency of the Chriſtian religion to promote even the temporal happineſs of mankind.

SEC.

SECTION I.

Of the preſent Aſpect of the Times.

WITHIN the ſpace of a few years, wonderful, and almoſt incredible changes have happened on the great theatre of the world. The American revolution was not only extremely important in itſelf, but has been productive of a ſeries of aſtoniſhing events. The principle, on which the American republic claimed and eſtabliſhed its independence, attracted univerſal attention. The foundations of civil ſociety, the natural rights of man, and the reciprocal duties of rulers and ſubjects, were univerſally diſcuſſed; and, in the courſe of the diſcuſſion, views and opinions with reſpect to the political and civil condition of mankind, to which the generality of men had, hitherto, been ſtrangers, were ſpread as far as the influence of the preſs could extend. Unhappily the greater part of European governments had equally departed from the principles of the religion they profeſſed, and from thoſe eternal maxims of juſtice by which every government ought to be directed, and ſubſtituted, in the place of theſe, the dictates of the moſt crooked and inſidious policy. Corruption, beginning at the head, had diffuſed its baneful contagion through the whole ſocial body. Although mankind were almoſt every-where panting for liberty, they were little qualified for its enjoyment, which can be obtained only in conjunction with that morality which directs freedom to its proper ends, and prevents it from degenerating into the groſſeſt licentiouſneſs.

One of the moſt corrupt courts of Europe was certainly that of France. Its unvarying aim had, for ages, been its own aggrandizement; and the means, which it employed for this purpoſe, were either craft, or violence, as the one or the other appeared moſt conducive to the immediate object in view. Actuated ſolely by that policy which dictated the diminution of a rival's power, this court, as regardleſs of the dangers which threatened itſelf, as it was indifferent to the principles of liberty, embraced the American cauſe, and powerfully contributed to its triumph.

The

The ſame policy led to foment diſcontents and diſſentions in other countries, and to undertake the defence of ſchemes of government the reverſe of thoſe by which its own adminiſtration was conducted. How ſhort-ſighted, how weak is the deepeſt policy of man! What, in the view of thoſe, who purſued theſe plans, appeared the moſt penetrating ſagacity, and the moſt comprehenſive wiſdom, turned out, to them, the moſt egregious folly, and the moſt fatal deluſion.

The arts that were then practiſed, the pretexts that were employed, the writings that were diſſeminated, the armies and the fleets that were ſent out to accompliſh the deſigns of the French government—all contributed to diffuſe, through France, political opinions, and a national ſpirit unknown to it before. That flagrant abuſes in almoſt every department of the ſtate; ſcandalous diſapidations of public treaſure; the conſequent derangement of finance; the want of regular reſources to ſupply the deficiency; the impotence of royal power to procure extraordinary ones without ſome appearance of national conſent; the impious attacks againſt not only every form and deſcription of revealed, but even the fundamental principles of natural, religion, contained in the moſt admired and popular writings; and the libertiniſm and diſſolution of manners univerſally diffuſed, but particularly prevalent in the higher claſſes of ſociety—that all theſe circumſtances had prepared the French nation for ſome portentous and wide-extending revolution cannot be called in queſtion.

Its beginnings, indeed, wore a ſmiling appearance, and afforded a pleaſing proſpect of public felicity. Thoſe who wiſhed well to mankind, and ardently deſired more equitable and beneficent plans of public adminiſtration to be univerſally adopted, eaſily cheriſhed the delightful expectation of a happier æra beginning to dawn upon Europe.

But, in this expectation, it is evident that they rather indulged the repreſentations of benevolent fancy, than conſulted the calm dictates of rational anticipation. It could not reaſonably be ſuppoſed that a nation of ſuch levity of character, of ſuch ardent and impetuous paſſions, and ſo corrupted by luxury, and ſtill more by irreligion, would, when ſet free from thoſe reſtraints to which it had ſo long been ſubject, remain within any bounds of moderation. Scenes of tremendous deſolation ought, at all events,

events, to have been expected. It was impoſſible, alſo, in the nature of things, that the violent agitations of France ſhould not, in ſome way or other, affect every neighbouring ſtate, and ultimately extend their convulſive influence to the remoteſt parts of Europe.

The Jacobin faction, the moſt deſperate and profligate mentioned in hiſtory, ſpeedily ſpread, through their own country, confuſion, anarchy, and every ſpecies of unbridled licentiouſneſs, trampled under foot every feeling and ſentiment of humanity, confounded every moral diſtinction, and inveſted, with the badges of honour, the moſt deteſtable forms of criminality. Theſe men had ſeen, in the writings of pretended philoſophers, the groſſeſt corruptions of Chriſtianity expoſed as the genuine doctrines of our holy faith. They had ſeen the virulent perſecutions, which theſe corruptions, in ſubſervience to the moſt iniquitous paſſions of the human breaſt, had occaſioned, imputed to a religion which breathes univerſal charity and kindneſs, and prepares man for heaven by rendering him beneficent and virtuous on earth. They had ſeen its pureſt precepts, which ſoar far above morality merely human, repreſented as impracticable, or pernicious. They had learned to conſider every real Chriſtian as a fanatic, and to claſs every ſpecies of religion with ſuperſtition and hypocriſy. Rejecting Chriſtianity, therefore, as a fable, they reſolved to extirpate it wherever their power might extend, and, with a ſpirit of freedom diſdaining ſubmiſſion even to infinite wiſdom, goodneſs, and power, to dethrone, in idea, the Sovereign of the univerſe. Pretending to wage war with fanaticiſm, they exhibited it in a form and ſhape unknown and unconceived before—the fanaticiſm of atheiſm, the burning zeal of impiety, the ſublimated ſpirit of political intolerance.

Now, for the firſt time, was diſplayed, to the world, the ſpectacle of a legiſlative body renouncing all regard for religion, and openly proclaiming, as the perfection of wiſdom, the diſbelief of a Deity and of a future ſtate. The ſtrongeſt ties, by which mankind are bound, and the moſt powerful motives, by which they are influenced to the practice of virtue, were, under the ſanction of avowed principle, broken and deſtroyed, and what reaſon itſelf had eſtabliſhed, on the ſtrongeſt foundations, was conſidered as the reverie of diſordered fancy.

So nearly, however, are extremes allied, that, in the midſt of this flagrant renunciation of all religious principle, the open profeſſion and practice of idolatry and polytheiſm were adopted. Thoſe, who diſclaimed the religion of Chriſt, and the worſhip of God, erected altars to the imaginary goddeſs of liberty, and to the deified perſonification of their country, and attempted to revive the abſurd religious ceremonies of Greece and Rome. So that, among all the other extravagancies of the preſent age, was exhibited the inconſiſtent union of atheiſm, and ſuperſtition, while each of theſe diſcordant principles counteracted the effect of the other; atheiſm preventing ſuperſtition from affording any check to the crimes of its profeſſors, and ſuperſtition inſpiring that fanatical rage which atheiſm pretends to prevent—An appearance of deluſion and frenzy hitherto unexampled in the annals of the world.

As this frantic ſpirit endeavoured to propagate its tenets through every ſurrounding nation, and to overturn every eſtabliſhed form of government, it was not ſurpriſing that princes and ſtates ſhould combine to reſiſt it: and, if ever there was a time, when mutual intereſt dictated mutual and cordial co-operation, and the abandonment of all narrow, partial, and ſelfiſh views, it was ſurely that in which the coalition was formed againſt the torrent of the French anarchical ſyſtem. But, the reverſe of all this took place. The Continental powers were united by no principle of common welfare. They were actuated by no regard for the happineſs either of their own ſubjects, or of mankind in general. That old ſyſtem of crooked and narrow politics, by which the cabinets of Europe have been too much influenced for two hundred years backwards, dictated their meaſures, and directed the whole of their proceedings. Each ſought only ſome little acquiſition of territory, of treaſure, or of power. Their ſubſequent conduct juſtified the imputations of their enemies; and, while they profeſſed to ſtop the torrent of impiety, anarchy, and cruelty, they contributed to its more extenſive and rapid courſe. What has been the reſult? Their feeble and ill-concerted oppoſition has afforded, to a power the moſt enterprizing and dangerous that has appeared in the world ſince the times of ancient Rome, all that advantage which attends the ſplendor and the dread of victory; and, while their weakneſs has removed

moved every reſtraint of fear, they have loſt that reſpect which would, at leaſt, have been attached to principle. The fiends of war have been let looſe to ravage and deſolate Europe; poverty, diſtreſs, bloodſhed, and almoſt every ſpecies of miſery have been widely extended, with no other effect, but that of augmenting that very evil, the prevention or diminution of which was to have been the ſole compenſation of ſuch immediate calamities. Wherever we turn our view, nothing is preſented but the moſt melancholy ſubjects of contemplation.

We behold the ſtrongeſt bonds of ſociety burſt aſunder over a conſiderable part of Chriſtendom, the tendereſt charities of nature trodden under foot, impiety, blaſphemy, and atheiſm ſtalking on the earth with daring front, and bidding defiance to the thunder of the Almighty. We behold a nation, eſteemed one of the moſt civilized of Europe, ſtained with deeds of barbarity by which the moſt ferocious ſavages would have deemed themſelves diſgraced. We behold the wild and impious leaders of that nation, not content with having deluged its fields and its ſtreets with the blood of thouſands of victims ſacrificed to fear, to revenge, or to wanton cruelty; with having depopulated and laid waſte its cities, diſſolved all ſocial order, and extinguiſhed, in the breaſts of their countrymen, all true ſenſe of juſtice, humanity, and religion, ſucceſsfully employed in ſpreading the ſame confuſion and miſery through every other nation to which they can extend their power. We behold ſome of the principal Sovereigns of Europe now trembling before the gigantic French Republic, eagerly courting reconciliation with her, joining in the bands of amity with thoſe whom they had proclaimed the moſt atrocious malefactors, and, in order to compenſate the loſſes, they have ſuſtained in the conteſt, in which they have been engaged, adopting thoſe very ſchemes of invaſion of their weaker neighbours, which in her they had ſo ſtrongly reprobated. We behold two powerful ſtates deprived of political exiſtence, and divided by the hand of rapine *, and others ſtripped of half their poſſeſſions. We ſee our own country almoſt exhauſted by a bloody, expenſive, and exaſperated war; and although, by the divine undeſerved mercy, we have, hitherto, been preſerved

* Poland and Venice.

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from that confuſion, diſorder, and ruin which have overwhelmed other nations, we are uncertain how long this advantage may be continued.

Never before did modern Europe experience a more dreadful concuſſion—a concuſſion already productive of the greateſt changes, and announcing ſtill greater, and more numerous. For, the fermentation, which every-where agitates the minds of men, cannot ſoon ſubſide. Paſſions, ſo ſtrongly, and ſo generally excited, muſt, like water which has burſt every bank and mound that contained it, ſpread their inundations far and wide, till they, at laſt, find their own level. Notwithſtanding the general deſire, and, acknowledged neceſſity of peace to all Europe, there is little probability of its complete reſtoration, and ſtill leſs, of its continuance, for a ſeries of ſucceeding years. From this country the inſolence and injuſtice of its enemies have removed all hopes of pacification for the preſent. The ſpirit of conqueſt, and of univerſal dominion appears evidently to have ſeized the preſent rulers of France. Peace is contrary both to their immediate poſſeſſion of power, and to their exorbitant ſchemes of aggrandizement, nor till theſe are completely and irretrievably fruſtrated, are there any hopes of a general and permanent pacification.

The laſt general ferment which Chriſtendom experienced was that which was occaſioned by the reformation. Wars and rumours of wars did not ſubſide for nearly a century after they commenced. It is true that all theſe commotions and calamities were ultimately productive of the greateſt good both to the civil, and religious intereſts of mankind. But, while human corruption is ſo deeply rooted, and ſo widely ſpread, it is hardly poſſible that correction, amendment, and final peace can be obtained without great and laſting ſeverities. The ferment, which now exiſts, is, indeed, of a complexion very different from that juſt ſtated. It is merely political, and ſtrongly irreligious. But, it is a great and extenſive ferment, and muſt produce effects adequate to its force and diffuſion.

Now, if theſe are not the *judgments of God in the earth*, when did they ever exiſt? When has his arm ever been more conſpicuouſly diſplayed, from the clouds, wielding the threatening ſword, to impreſs, on the inhabitants of the world, the long forgotten leſſons of *righteouſneſs?* Theſe judgments are not to

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be confounded with the more doubtful ones of hurricanes, earthquakes, tempeſts, or inundations, which, though adapted to rouſe men to reflection, and to a ſerious review of their moral ſtate, ſpring not immediately from human depravity, and bear not along with them the diſtinct impreſſions of moral evil. The judgments, which now afflict mankind, can all be traced back to the moſt polluted ſources of corruption, and, originating in the profligacy of the higher ſtations of ſociety, have diffuſed their contagion through the whole ſocial maſs. *From the ſole of the foot even to the head, there is no ſoundneſs in it; but wounds and bruiſes and putrifying ſores**. *It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not conſumed, becauſe his compaſſions fail not*†.

The love of money, *the root of all evil*, is univerſally predominant. The commercial ſpirit, laudable, indeed, and ſalutary, when reſtrained within due bounds, and regulated by the principles of piety and morality, now appears to abſorb every other conſideration, to preſcribe the moſt extenſive gain as the meaſure of public intereſt, to extinguiſh the genuine love of country, and to eradicate all ſenſe of national honour. The maſculine, elevated, and wiſe ſentiments of our anceſtors ſeem to have given place to a ſordid deſire, and an ignoble veneration, of wealth, to an intemperate love of pleaſure, to waſting luxury, and to all the frivolity and effeminacy of a luxurious and opulent age. Diſſipation and profanity are no longer confined to the higher ranks, where they long reſided, but have deſcended to the lower, aggravated by all that coarſeneſs which always accompanies a mean education. Among them, the doctrines of infidelity have alſo been diſſeminated with a facility of reception which would, a few years ago, have been accounted impoſſible. Never before were thoſe conjugal ties, the ſanctity of which is the ſureſt pledge of purity of morals and of public happineſs, ſo wantonly broken; never was domeſtic felicity ſo frequently ſtabbed, and all that people owe to their children and families, ſo ſhamefully neglected or forgotten; never was there a period in which religion was ſo little ſtudied, in theory, and ſo little manifeſted in practice; in ſo much, that it appears to be the only ſubject which ought not to occupy people's thoughts, and the only principle that ought not to influence their conduct. Even when any re-

* Iſaiah i. 6. † Lament. iii. 22.

gard for religion remains, how often does it degenerate either into bigotry or fanaticiſm, or into mere external obſervance, and a reſpect for public inſtitutions? The ſmall influence of genuine piety is evident from this circumſtance, that it very frequently happens, that perſons, who are uncommonly zealous for a particular ſyſtem of religious opinions, are by no means affected by the attempts of deiſts or atheiſts to ſap the foundations of all religion both natural and revealed, and even applaud their pernicious doctrines, merely becauſe they agree with them on certain political points. Can this be called any thing elſe but an obſtinate ſectarian ſpirit, devoid of all pure religious principle? Public ſpirit is generally either a blind attachment to party, or an invincible devotion to opinions adverſe to rational freedom, and good government, either by their tendency to deſpotic oppreſſion, or to democratical anarchy. Thanks be to God! for the remnant of virtue that is ſtill preſerved among us, in the humanity and charity which characterize our nation, and, in ſome meaſure, redeem the manifold turpitude by which it is diſgraced.

After this view of the calamities and the vices of the preſent times, of the events which have ſo recently happened, and of that peculiar aſpect of the world, which admits of no other ſolution but that of an extraordinary appointment of divine providence, to puniſh the ſins of men, to reprove, in particular, the decay of religion, and to warn us to return, before it be too late, to her forſaken paths, it will now be proper to collect the inſtruction, which the judgments of God, ſo loudly proclaimed, are evidently calculated to convey.

SECTION II.

The religious and moral Inſtruction dictated by the preſent awful State of the Chriſtian World.

I. IT is clear that divine providence is proſecuting ſome great and extenſive plan in this lower world. What its peculiar nature may be, it would be raſh and preſumptuous to determine. But, with a deſire of moral and religious improvement, it certainly becomes us to attend to the moſt ſtriking features of the divine diſpenſations, as far as they can be diſcerned by

by our feeble and clouded ſight. Every thing, now happening on the great theatre of human affairs, is extraordinary and repugnant to the experience of ages immediately preceding. An attentive eye, however, may eaſily diſcover, in theſe events, the progreſs of over-ruling wiſdom, and the deciſions of ſovereign juſtice—A people, extremely corrupt and irreligious, has been let looſe to ſcourge the greateſt potentates of the earth; and, as their policy was chiefly derived from the French ſchool, and the libertiniſm, which they encouraged both by their precept and example, alſo flowed from the ſame ſource; ſo, has this been the very quarter from which their humiliation and their ſufferings have proceeded. The attempts of deſpotiſm to check the riſing ſpirit of liberty, and to cruſh it for ever, have completely failed. Her ſceptre has been broken by the blow by which ſhe intended to intimidate mankind. The great ones of the earth have received impreſſive admonitions, in the fate of the nobility and privileged orders of France, to beware of abuſing their diſtinctions and advantages, and of provoking the indignation of mankind, by their pride, their profligacy, and their irreligion. The writings of ſceptical and infidel authors were chiefly admired and recommended in the higher ſpheres of life. Many perſons in theſe ranks were pleaſed with them, becauſe they ſet them free from moral and religious obligations. What their depravity led them to wiſh, their ignorance prepared them to receive as truth. From them the admiration of theſe writings, and the adoption of their pernicious ſentiments, deſcended through the other orders of ſociety, till the contagion of impiety, univerſally diffuſed, prepared the French nation for the reception of thoſe ſhocking doctrines, which have produced the moſt dreadful diſaſters, of which the ſeverity has chiefly fallen on the higher ſtations*. On the other hand, the popiſh hierarchy, and all its abſurd and corrupting ſyſtem of ſuperſtition and intolerance have been overturned, not only in France, but in other countries, and a way opened for deſtroying them in thoſe where they ſtill appear to be firmly eſtabliſhed.

* See, in particular, the Poſthumous Works of the late King of Pruſſia, abounding with the moſt poiſonous infidelity, and the moſt virulent calumnies againſt the Chriſtian religion, and its divine Author.

Leſt, however, greater evils than thoſe which have been reproved and chaſtiſed, ſhould be introduced; leſt all moral diſtinctions ſhould be confounded; leſt blaſphemy, atheiſm, atrocious cruelty, the moſt dreadful oppreſſion, and every ſpecies and every degree of wickedneſs, ſhould appear completely ſucceſsful and triumphant; that very people, which has been uſed as the ſcourge of other nations and their princes, has endured, in a double meaſure, the calamities it has inflicted, and, in the midſt of its external victories, ſuffers at home every deſcription of national miſery. Its ſtreets have been deluged with the blood of their inhabitants, ſhed by their fellow citizens. The flames have conſumed its villages and many of its towns, and the fields have been covered with dead bodies. Trade and manufactures annihilated, agriculture neglected, every ſource of national proſperity dried up, ſuſpicion, jealouſy, diſtruſt, and revenge reign almoſt in every heart. Parties have riſen upon parties; revolutions have ſucceeded revolutions; agitations and convulſions have never ceaſed. All the temporary leaders of factions have periſhed either by their own hands, or by thoſe of the executioner, or by thoſe of the aſſaſſin, or have been driven into exile. Even while I am writing, the laſt revolution has exhibited one of the moſt aſtoniſhing ſtrokes of deſpotiſm that ever terrified mankind. Their moſt diſtinguiſhed legiſlators, politicians, and warriors have, without form of trial, been ſentenced to tranſportation, and ſent off, in covered waggons, like ſo many wild beaſts.

In all this, ſo extraordinary, ſo glaringly repugnant to the uſual train of human affairs, may we not obſerve a peculiar direction of Providence, purſuing ſome grand and ultimately ſalutary plan? Do we not clearly perceive, that the impotence of deſpotiſm, unſupported by the attachment and affection of ſubjects, has been expoſed; the groſs corruptions of Chriſtianity have, in many places, been exploded; the folly, diſſipation, and oppreſſion of the elevated and opulent have received an alarming admonition: That, on the other hand, the calamities of unprincipled licentiouſneſs, abuſing the ſacred name of liberty, the horrors of irreligious philoſophy, and the devaſtations of anarchy and democratical tumult, have been preſented to mankind in ſuch a horrid and ghaſtly ſhape, that it is impoſſible the leſſon can be ſoon forgotten: That, from the ſerious review of both ſides of the

the picture, this concluſion muſt inevitably follow: that a government equally removed from anarchy and arbitrary power; that pure and undefiled religion, ſuch as is inculcated by the ſacred ſcriptures; that juſtice, moderation, and condeſcenſion in high and wealthy ſtations; and contentment, induſtry, and a becoming reſpect for ſuperiors in the lower claſſes of ſociety, are the chief bonds of civil union, and the grand ſources of public and private felicity; and that whatever, in either extreme, is repugnant to theſe, ought to be viewed with abhorrence, and repreſſed with vigour.

A general indifference for religion had begun to ſpread over Europe. Aſhamed of ſuperſtition and bigotry, of fanaticiſm and intolerance, mankind were verging to the contrary extreme, and the flame of piety was faſt expiring in every heart. Political, commercial, and œconomical ſubjects wholly engroſſed the inquiries of philoſophers, and conſtituted the chief ſtudy of thoſe who devoted any part of their time to ſerious reading. Theology was no more attended to; and, even in proteſtant countries, the groſſeſt ignorance of religious truth began to prevail. It was no diſgrace for a man of education, who was not, by profeſſion, a divine, to know nothing of the fundamental doctrines of the religion which he profeſſed, of the diſcriminating articles of faith, diſcipline, and worſhip of the different churches into which Chriſtians are divided, or of thoſe evidences of divine original by which they concur in defending their religion againſt the attacks of deiſts. As for practice, how few, in any Chriſtian country, thought of regulating their lives by the precepts of Chriſt, or allowed their plans of conduct to be influenced by their views of heaven!

Infidels, availing themſelves of this neglect of religion, ſo generally prevalent, formed the deſign of extirpating every ſpecies and deſcription of Chriſtianity, and of putting their atheiſtical philoſophy in its place. In the proſecution of this deſign, and of political ſchemes connected with it, the moſt atrocious actions have been committed, and the ſtrongeſt ſenſations of horror impreſſed on every good and feeling heart. Mankind may now clearly ſee that fanatical exceſs is not peculiar to religious zeal, but accompanies other violent and outrageous paſſions, and that men may perſecute from irreligious, as well as from religious, motives. Every impartial perſon, who will attend to the ſub-

ject, muſt be convinced of the mild and beneficent tendency of Chriſtianity. This conviction, when the natural effects of this religion are contraſted with thoſe of principles hoſtile to it, will come home to every mind with greater force. The ſpirit of piety may thus gradually revive; the Chriſtian faith may be more reſpected and loved than it had been for a conſiderable period before. Of this there are already ſome indications. The higher ranks of ſociety appear to be convinced how pernicious it is, even to their worldly intereſt, to ſpread, through the community, that diſregard for religion, which ſoon brings along with it a contempt for human authority. They begin to be more attentive to the external duties of religion; and, although this principle, as long as it is confined to appearances, is of little account in religious eſtimation, yet, what commences in fear and intereſt alone, if it ſuperinduce ſerious and reflecting habits, may terminate in love, and the ſincere practice of piety. Even that general agitation which prevails, although, at preſent, directed to political ſubjects, may alſo admit of religious impreſſions, if ſeaſonably and forcibly applied. When men's minds are rouſed to exertion, they frequently grow diſguſted with one ſubject of inquiry, and love to vary the channel of their activity. Total indifference to religion is unnatural to the human ſoul; and, when inveſtigation, whatever be its immediate object, is once ſet on foot, a ſubject, of all the moſt important, can hardly fail to attract attention, whenever its light and evidence are allowed to ſhine without the interpoſing clouds of prejudice. Religious zeal appears, even now, to be rekindling for the extenſion of the goſpel to heathen nations. The deſign is highly laudable in itſelf; but the more important and laudable any deſign is, the more neceſſary it is to conduct it with wiſdom, a proper application of the moſt effectual means, and, on the grand principles of Chriſtianity, unconfined by the diſtinctive tenets of parties and ſects*. The ſubverſion of the power of the Romiſh Church, over ſo large an extent of its former dominion, opens an extenſive field for diſſeminating the original ſimplicity of the goſpel, if proteſtants in thoſe countries had but the zeal, and the courage to undertake it. That we have never heard of any attempt of this kind, is a la-

* How far this has been the caſe in the preſent inſtance, the iſſue will probably determine.

mentable

mentable proof of the decay of religious principle, where it might have been expected to retain ſome portion of vigour. While we ſo frequently hear of political communications; while republicaniſm and democracy are ſo prone to receive, and to impart, aſſiſtance; while the moſt important intereſts of the human race are alleged as the predominant motive; it is ſurpriſing that intereſts, far more important than any confined to this earth, ſhould animate to no attempts to communicate the full light of goſpel-truth, either to thoſe who behold only its feeble glimmerings, or to thoſe who turn away their eyes from it altogether. This is a ſpecies of fraternity unknown in our day, to which, however, the peculiar complexion of the times ſtrongly invites. Nor can I help thinking that ſome of that zeal, labour, and expence, which is now engroſſed by extending the goſpel to heathen nations, might, with as great advantage, and as fair a proſpect of ſucceſs, be employed in communicating, to thoſe countries, in which the power of the Romiſh Church has been overturned, the unadulterated truths, and the pure morality of reformed Chriſtianity.

Whatever be the ultimate object of the awful diſpenſations of divine Providence *now in the earth*, which no human foreſight can, without preſumption, pretend to diſcover, it is certain, that the reflections, above ſtated, are evidently dictated by them at preſent, and that, from theſe, conſiderable improvement in *righteouſneſs* might be derived. In the midſt of ſuch impreſſive ſcenes, can we remain as indifferent, careleſs, and ſecure, as if the whole aſpect of human affairs were illumined with the brighteſt ſunſhine, and inveſted with the moſt pleaſing colours? Shall we not be brought to ſerious reflection both on our national, and private ſins, which expoſe us to the divine vengeance, already diſplayed on every ſide of us, and endeavour, by ſincere repentance and amendment, to avert from ourſelves the calamities which have overwhelmed ſo many others, and which might alſo have juſtly fallen to our ſhare, but for the undeſerved mercy of God? Muſt it not become the moſt anxious wiſh, and moſt earneſt care of every reflecting perſon, that he may not be taken off his guard, but be found *watching and ſober*; that, though he ſhould be ſtripped of every other poſſeſſion, he may ſtill retain *one treaſure* which is ſubject to no corruption, and expoſed to no

violence, or fraud; that, if he ſhould be ſubjected to *tribulation, or diſtreſs, or perſecution, or famine, or nakedneſs, or peril, or ſword*, he may ſtill retain the *love of Chriſt;* and that, if it ſhould pleaſe God to inflict theſe ſeverities upon him, either as trials, or as chaſtiſements, he may not *lay on him more than he is able to bear*, and direct his viſitations more by his infinite mercy, than by the deſert of the ſufferer.

On the review of the ſcenes which the world, at preſent, exhibits, ſuch reflections will unavoidably force themſelves on the mind of every man who entertains any ſenſe of religion. If they made that general impreſſion, which they are certainly calculated to produce, the calamities, which have fallen to the ſhare of ſo many of the human race, would not have been appointed in vain! We proceed to more particular reflections.

II. *The judgments of God now in the earth* loudly call on all civil rulers and magiſtrates, to keep conſtantly in view the public good, to acquire the moſt enlarged and comprehenſive knowledge of it, to diſcharge their truſt with the greateſt integrity, and to conciliate obedience and attachment by the wiſdom and benignity of their adminiſtration. Let them conſider that their offices are inſtituted ſolely for the public benefit, that their talents and their labour ought to be devoted to this object, and that every neglect, much more every wilful violation, of duty is not only highly criminal in itſelf, but, in the preſent times, muſt unavoidably expoſe them to the ſevereſt reproach, if not to the moſt imminent danger.

It is the height of folly for any perſon, intruſted with the public adminiſtration, to purſue a crooked and ſelfiſh policy, in oppoſition to the moſt evident ſchemes of national advantage. The generality of mankind are, at all times, apt to impute, to their governors, the moſt iniquitous and unjuſtifiable views. Of late years, they have grown uncommonly vigilant with regard to their conduct, and ſharp-ſighted in detecting its errors and defects. Sedition not only exaggerates real, but maliciouſly imputes fictitious, grounds of accuſation. Theſe calumnies muſt be refuted by a wiſe and benignant government. The experience of ſecurity, of increaſing ſources of proſperity, and of happineſs, generally diffuſed, muſt impreſs, on the minds of the governed, the moſt conciliatory conviction; and the confuſion,

iniquity,

iniquity, and diſtreſs, produced by the abſurd ſyſtem of *outrageous liberty and tyrannical equality*, muſt be contraſted with the pleaſing diſplay of order, of juſtice, and of the full enjoyment of every civil and political right, as far as is compatible with civil ſociety. The days, when rank and office were illumined with the brighteſt luſtre, are paſt. The atmoſphere is overſpread with clouds, and agitated with tempeſts. The gloom can be diſſipated, and tranquillity reſtored, only by the ſteady and inextinguiſhable lights of beneficent talents, and of well-informed integrity.

The preſent times, in particular, inculcate, in the moſt impreſſive language, on princes, and rulers of every deſcription, to encourage, protect, and advance the knowledge, and the practice of pure and undefiled religion, and of every uſeful and liberal ſcience. Ignorance and prejudice are the great obſtructers of national improvement. Genuine and ſubſtantial knowledge is the firmeſt ſupport of lawful authority, the ſureſt guard of order and peace, and the moſt certain pledge of dutiful ſubmiſſion to law, and to its conſtitutional adminiſtration. The conduct, which reaſon preſcribes, religion ſtill more powerfully enforces. A people, accuſtomed to free inquiry, and to that calm and ſteady inveſtigation which leads to the diſcovery of truth, will not be eaſily miſled by the falſe lights of atheiſtical philoſophy, by the meteor glare of fanaticiſm, or by the funereal torch of ſuperſtition. Theſe are ſoon eclipſed by the bright and ſteady ſunſhine of ſound reaſon, and of revealed truth, which both diſcovers, and invigorates to purſue, the true road of happineſs. Let it never be ſaid that ignorance is the mother either of devotion, or of any thing good and valuable. Ignorance can confer no benefit, but a circumſcribed capacity of doing evil. A perſon brutiſhly ignorant, is innocent, or uſeful, as far as he reſembles an ox or a horſe whoſe bodily ſtrength may be uſefully directed and applied by human intelligence. Even the value of inferior animals is increaſed in proportion to the ſagacity and docility of their natures: and can it ever be maintained that ignorance and ſtupidity can be beneficial to any claſs or condition of men? Ignorance is the darkneſs of night which is as favourable to the approach of an enemy, as to our concealment from his view. Knowledge is the beneficent light of day, which, diſcloſing to us the ſurrounding objects in their true colours,

lours, and their juſt relations, enables us to purſue, or to avoid them, according to our circumſtances. Ignorance is the inſurmountable lot of brutes, and the temporary condition of infants. Knowledge is the acquiſition of men, one glorious quality of angels, and one ſupereminent attribute of God himſelf. From ignorance of true religion, of ſound morality, and of manly politics, have, in a great meaſure, proceeded the exceſſes committed by the French in the midſt of their arrogant pretenſions to ſuperior knowledge. Under a new form of government they continue to diſplay that union of frivolity, and of the moſt flagrant violation of virtuous principle, which they have ſo frequently exhibited under the old. Real knowledge, purchaſed by the deareſt experience, may perhaps lead them back to the right path in which alone true liberty, and its concomitant happineſs, can be found.

III. The inſtruction, dictated to civil rulers by the preſent awful diſpenſation of Providence, is equally applicable to all perſons of rank and fortune, though inveſted with no public office. On them a moſt ſacred obligation is impoſed, even in the moſt tranquil ſtates of ſociety, to uſe, with moderation and beneficence, the advantages which they enjoy. If, by indulging in every ſpecies of extravagance, of diſſipation, and debauchery, they groſsly abuſe them; if they not only debaſe themſelves by their vices, but, by their ſcandalous conduct, and pernicious example, ſpread corruption through the whole community; if they think themſelves entitled to bid defiance to all thoſe obligations and decencies which they conſider as binding upon their inferiors; if they lay hold of every opportunity of outraging their Creator, and inſulting that very religion, whoſe influence prevents their deſtruction; they are rebels againſt the Sovereign of the univerſe, and the declared enemies of mankind. *For all theſe things God will bring them to judgment.*

The day of trial is already come. Their indictment has been read with a tremendous voice, and they are called to plead to it. The abettors of the levelling ſyſtem, the patrons of fanatical equality, the profeſſed preachers of political regeneration, openly accuſe the privileged orders, and the generality of the opulent, of ignorance and folly, of diſſipation and debauchery, of pride and inſolence, of incapacity to diſcharge the important

duties

duties of civil life, of indifference to all that is really excellent, and praiſe-worthy, of veneration for the moſt contemptible accompliſhments and for their worthleſs poſſeſſors, and of the moſt hard-hearted oppreſſion, whenever their capricious wills are oppoſed. Theſe accuſations, falſe, indeed, and malicious, in a great variety of inſtances, can be fully refuted only by a conduct the reverſe of what is laid to their charge, and by an example as attractive of veneration and love, as its oppoſite is productive of contempt or hatred. A mere title, or even an opulent eſtate, no more ſecure reverential awe to their poſſeſſors: on the contrary, they are conſidered, by many, as ſufficient grounds of reproach and obloquy. Real and ſubſtantial merit ought, therefore, now to be employed to ſupport the aſſailed edifice of external and privileged pre-eminence; and ſuch ſtill is the propenſity of mankind to reſpect illuſtrious anceſtry, and to admire the glitter of wealth, that, if theſe are guarded by the virtues of the poſſeſſor, they will, in every ſociety, not agitated by revolutionary convulſions, remain ſecured againſt the ſecret arts, or open machinations of the enemies of all order and diſtinction. Let thoſe, therefore, who are raiſed in the ſcale of ſociety, whether by birth or by riches, endeavour to command the reſpect, and to conciliate the benevolence of mankind by their reverence for religion, and by the practice of every ſocial, civil, and domeſtic virtue. Let them be particularly careful in the education of their children, that they may qualify them to aſſert their hereditary honours, and to preſerve their eſtates, which are, at preſent, expoſed to ſuch danger, on the one hand, by the vices of the great and wealthy, and by the licentouſneſs of the lower orders, on the other.

IV. The awful events of the preſent times convey an important leſſon to the clergy. They exhort them, with the moſt impreſſive voice, to exert their utmoſt diligence, and their beſt abilities, to guard, from the contagion of impiety, and all its concomitant vices, thoſe who are committed to their paſtoral care. They warn them to try, by the ſtandard of the Holy Scriptures, the doctrines which they teach, to ſee whether they be *really of God*, or the *tradition and commandments of men*. They exhibit to them infidelity and atheiſm, the children of corrupted religion, and of worldly policy, now employed in deſtroying

their

their parents; and as they proclaim, that the *counſel of God cannot be overthrown*, and that *the gates of hell ſhall never prevail againſt the church of Chriſt;* ſo, they announce, that the counſel and the work of men, whenever they are inconſiſtent with the one and adverſe to the other, will come to nought. The clergy are called upon to conſider whether much of the impiety and profligacy of the preſent age is not occaſioned by their indifference, their negligence, and, ſometimes, by their attachment to worldly pleaſures and preferments. Let them reflect, that if the *ſalt has loſt its ſavour*, the corruption of the whole maſs is unavoidable; that if thoſe who ſhould defend, preſerve, and extend religion, are acceſſary to its overthrow, their guilt will be aggravated by the importance of the duties they have violated, by the loſs of all the good they might have done both to the temporal and ſpiritual concerns of their brethren, and by the unſpeakable miſery which they have actually occaſioned; and that their puniſhment muſt be proportionably increaſed. On the other hand, every generous and noble principle of their ſouls ought to be called into action by the efforts of infidels and profligates for the ruin of mankind; by the glorious nature of the ſtruggle in which they muſt engage; by the aſſurance of ſufficient ſuccour from the great ſource of light and power; and by the eternal and ſplendid reward which is promiſed to their magnanimity and perſeverance.

To them are, in a particular manner, committed both the eternal and temporal intereſts of their brethren, and on their exertions chiefly depends the preſervation of thoſe fundamental principles of juſtice, humanity, and temperance, which pure religion ſo firmly eſtabliſhes, and ſo awfully ſanctions. The conteſt, in the preſent day, is not between one particular form of religion and another, but between the exiſtence of any religion whatever, and the total extirpation of it; which laſt muſt be, of all calamities, the moſt dreadful that ever aſſailed the human race. It is a fooliſh notion to ſuppoſe, and direct experience contradicts the ſuppoſition, that infidels are adverſe to corrupt forms of Chriſtianity only, and that they are (as they ought to be, if conſiſtent with their profeſſion,) more friendly to the faith and worſhip of proteſtants. The reverſe is the caſe. Infidels are infinitely more lenient to the abſurdities and corruptions of popery than to the pure doctrines which the reformation reſtored. The reaſon is obvious:

obvious: the more abſurd any form of Chriſtianity is, a wider field is opened for their attacks againſt it, for the introduction of their ſchemes of deiſm, and, by eaſy conſequence, for the diſſemination of atheiſm itſelf; a ſyſtem, at preſent, much more widely prevalent than good men are willing to ſuppoſe.

To the honour of the eſtabliſhed clergy of both the churches of England and Scotland, the far greater part of them has been decidedly hoſtile to the atheiſtical doctrines of the French ſchool. Leſs averſion, I ſhall not ſay, more favour, has been ſhewn to this abominable ſect by diſſenters in both countries. Charity obliges us, and reaſon alſo diſpoſes us, to believe that this is to be aſcribed rather to political than to *religious*, or, to ſpeak more properly, *irreligious* motives. The ſucceſs of the French atheiſtical ſyſtem is connected with the ſucceſs of certain political opinions, and, for the ſake of the latter, the former is not oppoſed. Great zeal is profeſſed againſt popery, and its overthrow is a ſubject of great exultation. This is juſt and becoming in all who have any regard for pure Chriſtianity. But the ſame principle ought certainly to inſpire ſtill greater averſion from atheiſm openly profeſſed, and followed in conduct; or, if this is conſidered as an exaggeration, which I am far from granting that it is, at leaſt, from manifeſt, avowed, bigotted, and fanatical deiſm!

As the obligation is ſtrong on all profeſſed Chriſtians, eſpecially in the preſent times, to evince the efficacy of religious conviction by a virtuous and holy life; it is particularly ſo, on the clergy. If ever it was neceſſary to make *their light ſhine; that men ſeeing their good works may glorify their father which is in heaven*, that neceſſity exiſts at preſent. By the purity of the lives of Chriſtians in general, and particularly of thoſe whoſe peculiar office it is to teach and defend religion, its cauſe is moſt effectually ſerved, and the calumnies of its enemies triumphantly confuted. Nothing has done ſo much injury to the intereſts of Chriſtianity, as the unchriſtian lives of its profeſſors. There is, in mankind, a general propenſity to judge of the truth of any religious ſyſtem by the conduct of thoſe who have embraced it. Hence, the enemies of our holy faith, perceiving that it produces not thoſe bleſſed effects on manners, which we maintain ought to flow from the belief of it, transfer, to the doctrines of Chriſt,

that

that diſgrace which ought to reſt ſolely with the vices of Chriſtians. Their reaſoning is certainly fallacious and unfair; for, whatever be the conduct of thoſe who profeſs them, the doctrines and precepts of Chriſtianity remain equally true and excellent; nor is it to be queſtioned that they produce the moſt ſalutary effects in the hearts and lives of thouſands of believers, who, cultivating holineſs in *ſecret, ſhall be openly rewarded by their heavenly Father.* But if Chriſtians had, in general, lived more conformably to their profeſſion, fewer cavils would have been raiſed againſt Chriſtianity. It may be ſafely aſſerted, that the happy change which it produced in converts to the primitive church, that that admirable perfection of divine morality, that incarnate ſpirit of evangelical excellence which they diſplayed, were as effectual for the propagation of the goſpel, as the miracles by which its celeſtial origin was atteſted and confirmed. If the happy period ſhall ever arrive (and may God grant that it may be haſtened!), when the knowledge and belief of pure, unadulterated, reſtored, Chriſtianity ſhall generally reform thoſe vices which the corruptions or the ignorance of it have ſo much contributed to engender and cheriſh, the moſt effectual anſwer will be given to the calumnies of its enemies; the ſtreams will declare the purity of the fountain from which they flow; and, while *peace and good-will reign among men, glory will alſo be be given to God in the higheſt.*

V. To the people, in general, the leſſon, conveyed by the ſtriking events of our times, runs in this ſtrain:—"Beware of "revolutions of government, and of all ſudden and violent "changes. Beware leſt, inſtead of ſome partial inconveniences "you now experience, and think intolerable grievances, you "draw, on yourſelves, the unqualified preſſure of irreparable "calamities. Guard againſt the inflammatory addreſſes, or ſe"cret ſuggeſtions of inſidious demagogues, who endeavour to "rouſe your paſſions, as the inſtruments of their ambition, and "of your miſery. Such men are always tyrants in their hearts. "They wiſh to ſhake off all eſtabliſhed control, to obtain much "greater for themſelves, and their connexions. They have li"berty conſtantly in their mouths, and oppreſſion in their "thoughts. The profligacy of the preſent age has introduced "a diſtinction between public, and private character, as if a bad

"man,

" man, in private life, might be a real patriot. But, there is no " foundation for this diſtinction in the nature of things; and " pretended regard for the rights of men, when united with " private depravity, will ever be found to cover the moſt ambi- " tious and tyrannical deſigns. View the greater part of dema- " gogues, and of thoſe who aſpire at this diſtinction, in their " own families, and in every relation in which they are called " to act, and you perceive them haughty, overbearing, impa- " tient of contradiction, and executing, with a high hand, every " meaſure they have adopted. Is it poſſible that, if ſuch men " were inveſted with civil power, they would, in oppoſition to " their own intereſt and exaltation, maintain, with inflexible in- " tegrity, and fortitude, the genuine principles of liberty, and " of the equal enjoyment of right? In order to continue the " deluſion among the multitude, they would never ceaſe to talk " and harangue on theſe topics; but, while their ſpeech was ſo " magnanimous, their actions would bear every expreſſion of " iniquity and uſurpation. What has the French revolution at- " teſted, but one uninterrupted ſeries of jargon, and cant, and " noiſe about liberty and the rights of man, conjoined with the " violation of every civil and religious right, with the moſt un- " qualified oppreſſion, and with the moſt atrocious cruelty in " every variety of ſhape?

" The lower claſſes of the community, which turbulent and " ſeditious men chiefly uſe as their inſtruments, commonly gain " leaſt by every innovation. The anarchy and diſtreſs, which " popular commotions produce, arreſt the progreſs of induſtry, " the ſource of their ſubſiſtence. The profits and honours, ariſ- " ing from ſucceſsful inſurrections, are ſeized by thoſe who con- " certed and conducted them. The ſituation of their humble " followers either remains as it was before, or is rendered worſe " by the oppreſſion with which uſurpation is accompanied. " When you have the happineſs to live under a conſtitution of " government founded on principles of liberty both civil and re- " ligious, and adminiſtered with moderation and mildneſs, che- " riſh the enjoyment as one of the moſt precious gifts of heaven; " acquieſce cheerfully in the dictates of law, and willingly ſub- " mit to conſtitutional authority, which is the ſafeguard of your " lives, your properties, your reputations, your liberties, of all

domeſtic

" domeſtic comfort, of whatever you account moſt valuable and " dear. If you ſee abuſes, and deſire the reformation of them, " endeavour to obtain this by regular, calm, and conſtitutional " means. But, above all, read in the horrible example of France, " underſtand, and remember, that religion is the grand baſis of " ſocial union, the foundation of virtue, the ſource of true hap- " pineſs, whether private or public, domeſtic or civil; that, " when men abandon God and his worſhip, he gives them up to " all the workings, and all the conſequences of a reprobate " mind; and, when they abjure and blaſpheme the heavenly fa- " ther of the great family of mankind, they become the ſlaves of " that infernal fiend who is the tempter to wickedneſs, and the " author of miſery."

VI. All Chriſtians are certainly called, by the complexion of the preſent times, to value their religion as the moſt precious treaſure, to adhere to it with firmneſs, and to exert themſelves, to the utmoſt of their abilities, for its defence and extenſion. Every ſincere believer of the goſpel bleſſes God *for his unſpeakable gift of Jeſus Chriſt*, and is firmly perſuaded, that, as *life and immortality are brought to light by the goſpel*, ſo, he *has great joy and peace in believing*. With ſuch glorious proſpects as our divine religion unfolds to us, with ſuch bleſſed aſſurances of reconciliation with God, and of eternal happineſs as it gives, with ſuch complete evidence of its truth as it lays before us, how different is the condition of man, thus enlightened and ſupported, than when left to his own uncertain ſpeculations, and abandoned to his own unaſſiſted weakneſs. Degradation is converted into dignity, terror into compoſure, and diſtreſs into happineſs. Can any Chriſtian then, behold, with indifference, the impious attempts of infidels and atheiſts to wage war with heaven itſelf, to deface God's faireſt work on earth, his ſecond creation of man to righteouſneſs and holineſs, and to ſnatch, from him, the firmeſt ſupport of virtue, and the moſt ſoothing conſolation of calamity and affliction? Shall the divine inſtructions, the glad news of ſalvation, the bleſſed ſound of the glorious goſpel of peace, proclaimed by the Son of God, and by his inſpired apoſtles, *ſeem as idle tales*, and be claſſed with the abſurdities of heathen mythology? Shall the firſt teachers of Chriſtianity have ſealed, with their blood, their teſtimony to its truth, only to obtain, in

theſe

theſe laſt days, the character of weak and deluded fanatics? Shall ſo many bloody perſecutions have been undergone, with unſhaken patience, and undaunted fortitude, for the firſt eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity; ſhall ſuch cruel ſufferings have been endured, ſo many valuable and exemplary lives have been ſacrificed, and ſuch magnanimous reſiſtance have been oppoſed to ſpiritual tyranny, for the glorious reformation of religion; ſhall Chriſtianity, thus, have been planted, propagated, and reſtored at ſuch a vaſt expence of divine interpoſition, and of human virtue; and ſhall, in theſe latter times, a ſect of falſe philoſophers proclaim that the truth of God is a lie, and endeavour to extinguiſh its light? No: it is impoſſible that any, who underſtand, and have ſincerely embraced the doctrines of Chriſtianity, and profeſſed obedience to its precepts, can be deluded by this impotent ſophiſtry. Let thoſe, who have never known our religion, but in its groſſeſt corruptions, who have never felt its divine influence on their hearts, who have never ſeriouſly reflected on the nature and perfections, or even on the evidences of the exiſtence of the Supreme Being; let ſuch lend an ear to the miſerable ſophiſms by which the enemies of religion ſupport and propagate their abſurd and pernicious doctrines, which both outrage heaven, and ſap the foundations of ſociety. But, no perſon, who has ever ſtudied Chriſtianity, and been convinced, on rational grounds, of its truth, can run the ſmalleſt riſk of being ſhaken in his belief, and much leſs of being perverted in his conduct, by the arguments of the enemies of religion, which are frequently repeated, becauſe they are deſtitute of all ſolidity, in order that the frequency of their application may compenſate their want of ſtrength. Indeed, to this wretched ignorance, and culpable neglect of Chriſtianity, are chiefly owing the calamities which have overwhelmed the country, where this irreligious frenzy principally prevails, as well as moſt of thoſe which its arms have ſubdued. When the arts of impoſture were detected and expoſed, and the chains of ſuperſtition were broken, the true doctrine of Chriſt was unknown; and the reveries of diſeaſed philoſophy, meeting with no oppoſition from the dictates either of ſound reaſon, or of divine revelation, were palmed upon mankind as truths equally ſolid and ſalutary.

SECTION III.

Of the happy Tendency of Chriſtianity to produce temporal, and, particularly, national Happineſs.

THE prevailing paſſion of the times is the eſtabliſhment of ſuch forms of government as are moſt conducive to the happineſs of mankind. However laudable this object may be in itſelf, the reſult of its proſecution has, hitherto, been diſorder, carnage, and miſery. Whether any thing beneficial and ſalutary may, afterwards, ariſe, in compenſation for ſuch calamities, is ſtill matter of uncertainty. But, when projected improvements are begun on falſe principles, it is much to be apprehended that the ultimate reſult will hardly be productive of happineſs, as far, at leaſt, as the views of fanatical philoſophers are concerned. That divine direction may probably draw good out of evil has already been ſhown. This, however, cannot be pleaded in behalf of ſyſtems which directly produce the evil, and have no natural tendency to the remoter good.

If the Chriſtian morality, which is the only part of the Chriſtian ſcheme, with which, as having immediate influence on the happineſs of ſociety, we are, at preſent, concerned, be the pureſt that was ever delivered to mankind, the beſt adapted to every capacity, and confirmed by the moſt efficacious ſanctions, whatever ſyſtem of polity either rejects this altogether, or enfeebles its energy, muſt, in ſo far, counteract the moral improvement of our ſpecies, and, of conſequence, its greateſt happineſs. The chief object of all good laws is to eſtabliſh the grand principles of juſtice, equity, and humanity. By the Chriſtian religion this very end is uniformly purſued. In as far, then, as ſound morality ſhould conſtitute the eſſence of all juſt and ſalutary legiſlation, in ſo far the Chriſtian precepts ought to be cheriſhed by civil rulers, and the ſacred ſource from which they proceed, and the ſupreme authority by which they are ſanctioned, to be conſtantly kept in view, in order that greater force and efficacy may be given to thoſe rules of action which are the bands and ſupports of civil ſociety. It has, of late, become a popular tenet that political inſtitutions ought to have no connexion with religion,

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and neither to ſupport, nor to be ſupported by it; in a word, that national religion is equally pernicious to religious principle, and to the public welfare. From the union of politics and religion, it has been maintained, have proceeded the impoſtures of prieſt-craft, the worſt arts of oppreſſive politics, and the proſtitution of piety to the moſt flagitious purpoſes. Hence, the only means of ſecuring, to religion, her uncontaminated influence, and of depriving political craft of one of its moſt powerful engines, is to ſeparate religious, from political, inſtitutions, and never to ſuffer them, in future, to form any alliance.

If, by religion, be underſtood only a certain ſyſtem of ſpeculative opinions, whoſe object is the eſtabliſhment or maintenance of a certain form of religious ceremonies, without any regard to their influence on morals, the truth of theſe propoſitions will not be denied. The whole ſtrength of the argument lies in ſuppoſing that religion and morality are founded on different principles, and lead to different reſults; in a word, that religion and ſuperſtition are the ſame. But, if this opinion be falſe (as it moſt certainly is), if religion is no more to be confounded with ſuperſtition, than erudition with pedantry, or œconomy with avarice, equally falſe muſt be every concluſion drawn from this hypotheſis. If the proper notion of religion be, in general, the method of pleaſing God by practiſing, on juſt principles, every domeſtic, ſocial, and civil virtue; ſo far is it from being true that civil government ſhould diſclaim all connexion with religious inſtitutions, that the more it proceeds on theſe principles, which pure and undefiled religion preſcribes and enforces, the more likely it is to attain the ends for which it is appointed; and the more it departs from them, the more corrupt it will be in itſelf, and the more pernicious to ſociety. The only queſtion then is, not whether every form of religion ſhould be equally patronized or equally rejected by any ſtate, or whether political and religious intereſts be totally ſeparate, and independent of each other, but whether the religion, adopted by any ſtate, be true or falſe, ſalutary or pernicious. For, a civil community ought ſurely to advance and protect that ſyſtem of religion, which it is convinced has a tendency to promote the higheſt happineſs of mankind, for the ſame reaſons that any individual, who is impreſſed with ſuch conviction, not only may, but is even bound, in conſcience, to encou-

rage and extend it, without encroaching, however, on the rights of thoſe who may differ from him. If civil duties form an eſſential branch of religious precept, and if theſe duties are more ſtrongly enforced by religious motives, than they can poſſibly be by human laws, it muſt be an egregious defect in every ſyſtem of government to diſregard thoſe principles and inſtitutions, which afford the moſt efficacious means of advancing the great ends which it ought conſtantly to purſue.

It has, indeed, been frequently aſſerted, that Chriſtianity, conſidered as a ſyſtem of duty, can have no auſpicious influence on the civil proſperity of mankind, and muſt even have a contrary effect, by directing men's views wholly to another world, and, thus, diſqualifying every ſincere and zealous profeſſor of it from diſcharging the moſt important duties of a citizen. This falſe notion, which, I believe, was firſt broached by Rouſſeau, has had great influence in bringing pure Chriſtianity into diſcredit among all thoſe who conſider religion only as a political engine. As, to the misfortune of mankind, the greater part of politicians have adopted political ſyſtems formed on the moſt contracted ſcale, ſubſervient only to the ambition, or the intereſt of a few, and not to the general welfare of the community, it is no wonder that they have been either totally indifferent to an inſtitution which embraces the higheſt good, both temporal and eternal, not of one nation or country only, but of the whole human race, or have patronized thoſe corruptions of it which were moſt compatible with their ſelfiſh and illicit purpoſes. Thus, politics and religion have both been corrupted, and have mutually tended to corrupt each other more and more. But, becauſe vicious politics have contributed to corrupt Chriſtianity, and corrupted Chriſtianity has contributed to ſupport vicious politics, it will not follow that the pure religion of Chriſt will not have the happieſt influence on the civil condition of mankind. The reverſe will be found, on the ſlighteſt examination, to be the caſe. Of this ſome of the principal reaſons have been already ſtated, and it will ſtill more evidently appear by conſidering the chief objections which have been made to the effects of the Chriſtian precepts on civil conduct.

Chriſtianity, it has been ſaid, inculcates no patriotiſm, rouſes to no heroic deeds, and fires not the ſoul with the love of glory.

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The anſwer is, that this very circumſtance, by affording an inſtance of benevolent comprehenſion unknown to any other religion whatever, is a ſtriking proof both of its intrinſic excellence, and of the divine ſource from which that excellence flows. Chriſtianity inculcates not patriotiſm in expreſs words, becauſe her influence is not confined to one particular ſect or country, but tends to unite the whole human race in one great and happy family, of which God is the Father. But, ſhe inculcates univerſal benevolence, in which patriotiſm is included, and oppoſed to which, far from being a virtue, it is a moſt pernicious and tyrannical vice. Of this the patriotic virtues of the celebrated heroes of antiquity frequently exhibited the moſt flagrant examples. Chriſtianity animates not to feats of martial valour, becauſe ſhe abhors carnage and deſolation, becauſe *Chriſt came not to deſtroy, but to ſave men's lives*, and becauſe it was the object of his doctrine to form men to that heavenly temper which would baniſh war from the earth, and ſecure everlaſting peace by the practice of everlaſting righteouſneſs. But, in defence of truth and right, ſhe requires the moſt undaunted fortitude, and the moſt unſhaken perſeverance, commanding us *not to fear thoſe who can kill the body, but to fear him who can caſt both ſoul and body into hell.* Incorporating, with her canon, all the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament, ſhe records, with honour and diſtinguiſhed applauſe, the glorious exploits of thoſe illuſtrious champions, who fought the battles of the Lord againſt the heathen, and conducted his people to the promiſed land, or maintained them in the poſſeſſion of it, by their prudence and valour. She alſo exhibits, for examples, a band of Chriſtian heroes who, in the extent of their views, in the purity of their motives, and in the ſublimity of their principles, as much ſurpaſſed the brighteſt patterns of pagan antiquity, as the ſun outſhines the leſſer luminaries of the firmament. Chriſtianity fires not the ſoul with the love of glory, becauſe what is commonly called by this name is baſe in its origin, deſtructive in its operations, and miſerable in its iſſue. But, ſhe warms it with the love of God and of mankind: ſhe excites it to aim at that moſt diſtinguiſhed excellence which advances the glory of the former, by promoting the happineſs of the latter, and, by diffuſing truth and virtue through the world; and ſhe animates to theſe honourable and beneficent

purſuits by holding up, as their reward, a *crown of glory*, which is *incorruptible, and fadeth not away*.

With ſuch extenſive views, ſuch elevated principles, and ſuch animating motives, the true Chriſtian muſt neceſſarily feel the full force of that genuine patriotiſm which conſiſts in deſiring and promoting, to the utmoſt of his power, the beſt intereſts of his country, in conjunction with a regard for that univerſal juſtice, which comprehends the whole human race, and loſes not its force in the midſt of hoſtility. When his country is aſſailed by the unjuſt attacks of external enemies, the pure flame of patriotiſm muſt burn in his breaſt with redoubled brightneſs and vigour. Fortune will be readily offered up to the public ſupport, and life cheerfully expoſed for the common defence. That temperance, which our holy religion inculcates, muſt ſtrengthen its profeſſors to endure military fatigue. Love of order and obedience to legal government, ſo ſtrongly enjoined by the Chriſtian morality, will make them obſerve the moſt regular diſcipline. A juſt ſenſe of the bleſſings of well-regulated ſociety, joined to the right appreciation of civil and religious freedom, a confidence in the protection of the Almighty, and the hopes of immortal glory will reconcile them to hardſhip in a good cauſe, make them deſpiſe danger and death, and animate them with a courage which the moſt formidable enemy will not damp. Religion inſpires with a valour which is not raſh and inconſiderate, but manly, firm, and collected. Of all the armies in the world a ſkilful general would chooſe moſt to command, and leaſt to encounter, that which ſhould be compoſed of men inured to temperance and honeſt labour, accuſtomed to obedience and diſcipline, conſidering each other as brethren, and members not only of a terreſtrial but alſo of a heavenly community, aſſured of the bleſſing of the *Lord of hoſts*, and determined, under this, to ſacrifice their lives to their country's defence. Such exactly would be the army compoſed of Chriſtians ſincere, and rightly informed. So far, therefore, is our religion from being adverſe to military virtue, in its beſt and nobleſt ſenſe, that it inſpires, encourages, and invigorates it, in a degree unknown to any other ſyſtem of religious belief whatever. Influenced by ſuch principles, animated by ſuch motives, and looking up for protection to Him, *whoſe name is the God of hoſts*, an army would lead victory in

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its ranks. Nor would that intemperate deſire of aggrandizement, and that falſe ſecurity which victory ſo commonly produces, ever expoſe men of this character to diſgraceful reverſes. For, as the maintenance of their rights would ever be the only ſpring of their warlike operations; ſo would it alſo be their termination. They would ſhew themſelves as ready to lay down their arms, as they were able to hold them. In the midſt of triumph they would abhor war, and cheriſh the proſpect, and facilitate the reſtoration of peace, on the moſt moderate and equitable terms.

All the ſocial and civil virtues are ſo fully and ſtrongly enforced by Chriſtianity, that, by ſtrict and complete obedience to its dictates, thoſe follies and vices, which are the bane of civil life, would be entirely removed, and, even by the tolerable obſervance of them, would be greatly diminiſhed. Neither princes and governors would be oppreſſive, nor ſubjects rebellious, nor fellow citizens unjuſt to each other, but every ſtate would be a family of brethren, aſſiſting each other in the progreſs of their terreſtrial journey towards that everlaſting city, *whoſe builder and maker is God.* Different ſtates would only be different families, connected not only by the ties of a common nature, but by the ſtill ſtronger bonds of Chriſtian union, and of their relation to one Saviour, and head of the univerſal church. If ever the time ſhall come when the dreadful ſcourge of war, now ſo hypocritically deplored by thoſe who conſtantly aggravate and extend it, ſhall be baniſhed from the earth, we may ſafely predict that this will be only when the Chriſtian religion, evinced to the underſtandings, has taken firm hold of the hearts, and influences the conduct of men.

The mild, the amiable, the domeſtic virtues are preſcribed, by our religion, in a degree infinitely pre-eminent to that which any ſyſtem of mere morality can exhibit. And, what, in every ſyſtem of duty, is of the firſt conſequence, it enforces its precepts by the moſt powerful ſanctions, reaching not the external actions of men only, but penetrating into the inmoſt receſſes of the heart. It encourages obedience by the promiſe of the moſt precious and exalted rewards, intimidates tranſgreſſion by the menaces of the moſt dreadful puniſhments, and ſtrengthens the ſoul by the moſt efficacious ſuccours.

Let infidel philoſophers try to ſubſtitute, inſtead of this admirable ſyſtem of duty, any other of equal efficacy. They will ſoon find how ineffectual their abſtract ſpeculations are to affect the heart, to reſtrain the paſſions, to overcome the power of temptation, to check the inſolence of proſperity, to moderate the oppreſſive ſpirit of power, to bridle the licentiouſneſs of tumult, to ſoothe the pangs of affliction, and to enſure the practice of virtue in every circumſtance and condition of life. Woful experience has already proved that their vague and unprincipled ſpeculations, even when clothed with the moſt faſcinating appearances of benevolence, and adorned with all the colourings of popular oratory, have produced nothing but profligacy, barbarity, and devaſtation. Man requires a fixed and definite code, not abſtract theory, for a rule of conduct. That rule muſt be dictated by an authority acknowledged, and revered, as ſupreme, and that authority muſt be maintained by penal ſanctions, which cannot be eluded. All this religion alone can ſupply; and the Chriſtian religion has this peculiar advantage above every other, that, while it touches all thoſe ſprings of hope and fear, by which mankind muſt ever be moved, it alſo poſſeſſes ſuch evidence of its truth as can ſtand the moſt ſcrupulous examination.

If abſtract philoſophy, however ſolid and ſound, which is the reverſe of infidel and atheiſtical ſyſtems, is ever to be held ſufficient for the regulation of life, why are not the abettors of ſuch opinions, at leaſt, ſo far conſiſtent with themſelves, as alſo to maintain that all the laws of civil ſociety, and all the penalties by which they are enforced, ought to give place to thoſe ſpeculations of abſtract morality which they proclaim, to the world, with ſo much pomp, and affected benevolence, as the higheſt perfection of reaſon, and the firmeſt bonds of union among men? If they reply that, without laws enforced by viſible penalties, ſociety could not ſubſiſt, then, the ſame arguments alſo eſtabliſh the neceſſity of religious principle, becauſe, from this, even human laws derive that obligatory force, without a ſenſe of which all human ſanctions would not be ſufficient to enſure even that degree of obedience which now exiſts in the world. Such ſpeculators, therefore, if they are not blinded by prejudice, or hardened by corruption, muſt acknowledge that the admirable adaptation of the Chriſtian morality to the nature, the circumſtances,

ſtances, and the general condition of man, is a ſtrong internal proof of its divine origin, and a powerful recommendation of its utility. But, ſuch men are little affected by conſiderations of diſintereſted benevolence. Vain-glory, and an intemperate deſire of influencing the opinions of the world, and of directing it at pleaſure, are the real motives of thoſe actions which they aſcribe to the pureſt philanthropy. Never, ſurely, was that diſpoſition ſo glaringly manifeſted as in the preſent times, nor this ſhameful hypocriſy ſo infamouſly practiſed. Yet, theſe are the men who vilify the Saviour of the world, who, after a life of unparalleled beneficence, endured the moſt excruciating death, to accompliſh the deſign which infinite goodneſs alone could conceive. Theſe are the men who calumniate the character of his apoſtles, who relinquiſhed every worldly proſpect for the propagation of truth and virtue, and, in a very ſhort ſpace of time, turned ſuch vaſt numbers of the human race *from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan to the living and true God.*

Thus, the doctrines and precepts of Chriſtianity muſt, from their very nature, have the happieſt effects on all the ſources of national welfare. *Righteouſneſs exalteth a nation: but ſin is the reproach of any people.* That corruption of manners, civil diſſenſions, the inexorable inveteracy of party-ſpirit, and uncontrolled ambition have uniformly produced the ſubverſion of political communities; and that the contrary virtues have eſtabliſhed and preſerved their ſecurity, their power, their ſplendour, and their happineſs, the hiſtory of the world ſufficiently evinces.

Corruption, univerſally ſpread through a nation, taints and poiſons every ſpring of public proſperity, and deſtroys the vital principles of civil aſſociation. For, neither good laws, nor the vigorous execution of them, will enſure the public weal, unleſs a conſiderable proportion of virtue ſtill influence the community. Without this, the ſtate muſt neceſſarily fall to pieces, ſubmitting either to the yoke of a foreign invader, or reduced to the moſt wretched and contemptible condition by internal diſorders. To the preſervation of a free conſtitution of government purity of morals is particularly neceſſary. Freedom and general profligacy are incompatible with each other. What is profligate freedom? It is the freedom of confuſion, of tumult, of anarchy, of rapine, and murder, and every ſpecies of wickedneſs. It is the eſcape of

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every furious and peſtilential paſſion of the human ſoul. It is, in the firſt ſtage of ſettlement, the uncontrolled dominion of a powerful few, and, in the laſt, the hopeleſs ſubjection of all to the arbitrary and relentleſs ſway of a ſingle deſpot; the only form of government of which ſuch a people is any longer ſuſceptible. It is, therefore, the greateſt abſurdity to ſuppoſe that a nation, extremely corrupt, can eſtabliſh, on durable foundations, a conſtitution compatible only with great ſimplicity of manners, and with the general prevalence of religious principle.

To the Britiſh nation alſo, enjoying a free government, founded, indeed, on principles very different from thoſe of the French fanatics, it is a matter of the moſt ſerious concern, that we cannot preſerve our invaluable privileges, whether civil or religious, but by the ſame virtues by which our anceſtors obtained them—by piety, induſtry, ſobriety, and undaunted courage in defence of our country. By theſe virtues alone, proceeding from faith in Jeſus Chriſt, and conſtantly influenced by it, can we expect the favour and bleſſing of God, as individuals, or as a community; and, without his protection, *who enlargeth and ſtraiteneth the nations*, the deepeſt human policy is childiſh ignorance, and the greateſt human power is contemptible imbecility.

The divine juſtice ſeems, moreover, particularly intereſted in the preſent diſtribution of conſpicuous rewards and puniſhments to civil communities. On the grand theatre of political action, virtue and vice are both eminently diſplayed, and have a peculiar and diffuſive influence on the happineſs of mankind. It is neceſſary, therefore, that the rewards of the former, and the puniſhments of the latter, ſhould be marked in the moſt diſtinguiſhable manner. In the preſent world alone the characteriſtical diſtinction of nations ſubſiſts. In the next, there will be neither *Greek, nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian; bond or free: tongues, kindreds, and nations* will be no more. The bleſſed and the reprobate will be the only claſſes and diviſions of men. If the divine government is to be manifeſted with regard to political ſocieties, which ſeems ſtill more neceſſary, for the intereſts of virtue and religion, than with regard to individuals, the ſanctions of the divine laws muſt, as far as relates to the former, be executed in the preſent ſtate of things. That they are completely executed, in the moſt invariable manner, the hiſtory of all ages,

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as has been already obſerved, ſufficiently teſtifies. Thus, both the natural tendency of things themſelves, and our notions of the divine juſtice, concur to convince us that the pure precepts of the goſpel muſt have the happieſt effects in advancing the welfare of every nation by which they are reſpected and obſerved.

SECTION IV.

Inferences from the preceding Diſcuſſion.

IF it has fully appeared that piety and virtue, and, particularly, that pure ſyſtem both of theory and practice, which Chriſtianity inculcates, muſt neceſſarily have the happieſt influence on national proſperity; and that irreligion and vice are the certain cauſes of public, as well as of private, miſery; it follows that every ſentiment of rational patriotiſm, of a regard for our country, for its laws, its liberties, its proſperity, and its honour, loudly calls for a reformation of manners, and a revival of *pure and undefiled religion*. It may be alleged that the corruption of the times has ever been a ſubject of complaint, and that, as this corruption, equally prevalent in preceding ages, has, hitherto, produced no cataſtrophe, we have no reaſon to apprehend a worſe fate to our country than our forefathers experienced. Although the premiſes were true in their utmoſt extent, the concluſion, drawn from them, would be falſe and deluſive. For, if the vices of our anceſtors were as great as thoſe of their poſterity, this circumſtance, ſo far from affording any juſt cauſe of compoſure and ſecurity, ought the more to awaken our apprehenſions. The evil would, in this caſe, be of longer continuance, have acquired a more inveterate and confirmed complexion, and be, thus, approaching nearer and nearer to its fatal termination. It would appear a ſtrange argument, indeed, that the diſtemper, with which any perſon was affected, was not dangerous, becauſe it was deeply rooted in his conſtitution, and had bidden defiance to every remedy that had been adminiſtered for its cure.

But, if the caſe be duly conſidered, it will be found that the vices, now prevalent among us, have a more fatal tendency, with regard

regard to national welfare, than thoſe of preceding times. It is readily allowed that depravity has been too prevalent in every age of the world, and that every ſtate of civil ſociety, like every period of human life, has its peculiar vices. But, there are vices, which, like certain diſeaſes, are of ſuch a debilitating kind, that, when the civil community is deeply infected with them, it can hardly ever recover its priſtine vigour, but muſt die by a gradual decay. It is, therefore, of the greateſt conſequence to guard againſt theſe from the beginning, or, if they have been unhappily contracted, to apply, to them, the moſt efficacious remedies. Luxury, effeminacy, and voluptuouſneſs; a ſordid inſatiable thirſt of gain, as the only means of procuring ſuch indulgences; profuſion of expence, yet, the higheſt eſtimation of riches; ſelfiſhneſs, and indifference to the true welfare and glory of men's country; real or affected infidelity, an open contempt of things ſacred, or a conſtrained obſervance of them—theſe are the vices which characterize the age, and theſe are the vices which have the ſtrongeſt tendency to ſubvert national felicity.

Our depravity is greatly aggravated by the ſingular and diſtinguiſhed privileges which we enjoy, and by our ſituation when compared with that of other contiguous countries, groaning under the complicated calamities of conqueſt, extortion, pillage, deſolation, and every ſpecies of degradation that can fall to the lot of man; when compared with that people which, while it glories in its victories, endures the moſt dreadful internal diſtreſſes. As this is the moſt ſtriking proof of the divine benignity towards us; ſo, it demands our moſt lively gratitude, and, as the only proper expreſſion of it, loudly calls for a reformation of manners.

The judgments of God, it muſt be repeated, are *abroad in the earth.* He is exerciſing his juſtice on political communities. Some nations he is afflicting with the moſt dreadful calamities. Hardly any country of Europe is exempted from ſome ſpecies of afflicting diſpenſations. Our own ſituation is generally confeſſed to be critical. All concur in the deſire of its amelioration by exchanging the calamities of war for the bleſſings of peace. Repeated attempts, have, in vain, been made to attain the happy purpoſe. But, in the midſt of various ſchemes of national improvement, and of an univerſal deſire of peace, of the unmoleſted purſuits of commerce

commerce and wealth, of the undiſturbed enjoyment of eaſe, affluence, and tranquillity, how few look up to God, with the eye of faith, with the ſoul of piety, and with the heart of contrition? Is confidence placed in the divine goodneſs, and the hope of brighter days excited by the views of true religion? Have public calamities produced any tendency to national reformation of manners, any plans for its commencement? The exiſtence of abuſes, the neceſſity of their correction, the moſt effectual means of its accompliſhment are daily agitated, and diſcuſſed. But, no mention is ever made of the only radical and effectual *reform*, a *reform* of heart and conduct. It is aſtoniſhing, that, in this *reforming* and *regenerating* age, the *reformation* of manners and the *regeneration* of the ſoul ſhould be entirely forgotten. By ſome our diſtreſſes are imputed to our rulers; by others, to their opponents; by both, to ſome cauſe in which the complainant has no ſhare; and by none, to the grand, the primary, and the univerſal one—a general corruption of morals, tainting the firſt ſprings of national welfare, deſtroying unanimity, maſking, with the moſt ſpecious appearances, the moſt ſelfiſh and unlawful paſſions, enervating our vigour, ſpreading diſſenſion, and animoſity, removing thoſe grand, elevating, and unconquerable principles which religion alone can ſupply, and expoſing us to the merited vengeance of heaven. If every perſon would ſeriouſly think of reforming himſelf, a general reformation of manners would be the neceſſary conſequence; and this would produce every other ſalutary reform. If political abuſes exiſt, and that they do exiſt is undeniable, they are the offspring of national corruption. The fountain itſelf muſt be purified before it can ſend forth pure and ſalutary ſtreams. The influence of genuine religion, and of virtue, its conſequence, would ſpeedily reſtore health and vigour to the whole political body. Without this every other medicine may palliate, but can never radically cure; may delay, but never can completely prevent the fatal iſſue of national diſtemper. The miſchief is, that the more mankind are corrupted, the leſs ſenſible they are of their corruption, and the more they are diſpoſed to complain of its natural and neceſſary effects, and to aſcribe them to every cauſe, but the real one, which, till removed, muſt continue to operate with increaſing violence.

That deiſtical writings have more powerfully, than any other cauſe

cauſe whatever, contributed, in this, and other countries of Europe, to the diſſemination of vice, and to the deſtruction of all thoſe principles which either adorn or preſerve ſociety, can hardly be doubted by any reflecting mind. The pernicious effects of thoſe writings have been proved by the moſt melancholy experience; and are depicted, in the moſt glaring colours, in the convulſions and calamities of the preſent times. The futility of their reaſonings has been ſufficiently evinced by the maſterly anſwers which have been made to them, as the preceding volumes of the learned and accurate Leland have clearly ſhewn, in relation to the deiſtical performances, of any reputation, which had made their appearance before he wrote. Thoſe, which have been ſince publiſhed, although, in many inſtances, the productions of men eminent in the literary world, have alſo been triumphantly refuted. An account of theſe, and of the defences oppoſed to them, might form a very uſeful additional volume: and, if God ſhall grant, to the writer of this Appendix, the neceſſary health and leiſure, he may, perhaps, turn his thoughts to this undertaking, which, however, he ſhould be happy to ſee executed by ſome abler hand.

After all, it is not ſo much the ſtrength of deiſtical arguments, that has given ſuch currency to infidelity, as the corrupt inclinations which they ſo ſtrongly favour; and nothing can ſo powerfully tend to check theſe, as the experience of the evil conſequences of their indulgence. Religion has, in former times, been expoſed to contempt by the cant and jargon of its zealous, but ignorant, or hypocritical defenders and propagators. Philoſophy, endeavouring to riſe on her ruins, and load even true religion with all the cenſure, which is due to the falſe only, has, at laſt, had its turn of diſgrace. It is ſurely impoſſible to conceive greater nonſenſe, abſurdity, and madneſs, than have been vented under that ſpecious name. Philoſophy has been ſuppoſed to conſiſt with the rejection of every principle of common ſenſe, and of every dictate of experience, with barbariſm, cruelty, and the devaſtation of all that is fair, and good, and honourable in life. A perſon, who conſiders the vulgar and common acceptation of the term, as eſtabliſhed by recent uſe, muſt dread the appellation of a philoſopher as implying every thing abſurd and pernicious. But, the wiſe and the good will ever diſcriminate between

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the real, and the fictitious names, between the uſe and abuſe of things. As they know that true religion, contained in the divine oracles, is the moſt precious gift of heaven; ſo, they will be more ſtrongly attached to it by thoſe very corruptions which have proceeded from the ignorance and depravity of men. In like manner, while they abhor that pretended philoſophy, which is diſſeminated by impoſture, received by credulity, cheriſhed by vice, and detected, at laſt, by its baneful conſequences, they will ever reſpect and cultivate that real improvement of reaſon, which is the reſult of experience, and of patient inquiry, which enlarges and humanizes the ſoul, ſtrengthens every pure religious principle, extends the reign of order, peace, and happineſs, and unites the higheſt enjoyments of the preſent life with the exhilarating aſſurance of a bleſſed immortality. A philoſophical mind of this complexion will regard every infidel writer as an enemy to the beſt intereſts of mankind, will diſcourage, to the utmoſt of his power, and oppoſe his principles; and, although, in conformity to the expreſs dictates, and to the general ſpirit of our holy faith, he will hate every perſecution of his perſon, or defamation of his character, will view his attempts to ſubvert the grand principles of religion, with contempt, or abhorrence, as he appears to be influenced either by a weak judgment, or by a corrupt heart.

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MORAL SENSE—Lord Bolingbroke ridicules thoſe that ſpeak of it; and treats it as enthuſiaſm, II. 31.

MORAL EVIDENCE AND CERTAINTY—See EVIDENCE.

MORGAN, Dr. Thomas—An account of his *Moral Philoſopher*, I. 140, *&c.* He acknowledges the great uſefulneſs of divine revelation in the preſent ſtate of mankind, and particularly of the Chriſtian revelation, *ib.* 141. But leaves no way of knowing when a revelation is really given, nor will allow us to receive any thing upon the authority of it, *ib.* 148. Denies miracles or prophecy to be proofs of divine revelation, *ib.* 149. His invectives againſt the Old Teſtament, and againſt the ancient prophets, *ib.* 150. He profeſſes a great veneration for our Saviour, yet inſinuates ſeveral unworthy reflections upon his perſon and character, *ib.* 150, 151. Pretends that the apoſtles preached different, and even contrary Goſpels, *ib.* His pretence, that the New Teſtament was corrupted by the Jews, examined, *ib.* 151. Anſwers to the firſt volume of his *Moral Philoſopher*, ib. 153, *&c.* An account of his ſecond volume, and remarks upon it, *ib.* 158, *&c.* His groſs miſrepreſentations of the Scripture-hiſtory, *ib.* 156—158. 163. An account of his third volume, and the anſwers to it, *ib.* 163, 164.

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